



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

LEISURE HOUR
SERIES

THE LEADEN GASKET

MRS A. W. HUNT

HENRY HOLT & CO PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK

LEISURE HOUR SERIES.

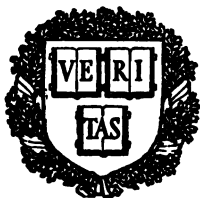
on of works whose character is light and entertaining,
vivial. While they are handy for the pocket or the sachel,
either in contents or appearance, unworthy of a place on
elves. 16mo, cloth. \$1.00 PER VOLUME.

27. 5

LEISURE HOUR SERIES

G—A set of the works
obtained in library
library style, \$1.10.

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY



FROM THE LIBRARY OF

MRS. ELLEN HAVEN ROSS
OF BOSTON

RECEIVED JUNE 28, 1938

ESWORTH, Mrs.
RCOURT.
HANT, Mrs.
LADIES.
RAVE, W. G.
ANN AGHA.
E. LOUISA.
CARTEW.
S FOR PRI-
E ACTING.
TER, E. F.
TLE LADY
A.
ARDSON, S.
SA HARLOWE, (Con-
K.)
TER, J. P. F.
R, FRUIT, AND THORN
RS. 2 vols.
NER THAL, etc.
2 vols.
AUS. 2 vols.
RTS, Miss.
SE ORLIGE.
EDGE OF STORM.
IID, H.
AHERMISTER.
In the FENS. A
H. H. and J.
ED ADDRESSES.
HAGEN, F.
THE SWALLOW SANG.
KERAY, W. M.
AND LATE PAPERS.
GENIEFF, I.
RS AND SONS.

FEVR.
FLOUDINE.
FLOODS; LEAR.
SOIL.
ER, C. O. F.
ESS JUDITH.
IAN.
DE SOCIETE.
ARI, LINDA.
NGE UNCHANGED.
FORD, L. B.
TITH.

COUNT KOSTIA.
PROSPER.
GORKRAN, ALICE.
BESSIE LANG.
GRAVEN, Mme. A.
FLEURANCE.
DEMOCRACY, A *Neto*
American Novel.
DICKENS, CHAS.
THE MUDFOG PAPERS, etc.

LAFFAN, MAY.
THE HON MISS FERRARD.
CHRISTY CAREW.
McGRATH
PICTURES FR
MAJENDI
GIANNETTO.
DITA.
MAKWE
A STORY OF T

FAULTS-
COUSINS.
TROUBLESOME DAUGHTERS.
WINthrop, THEO.
Contrath.

ripe.

RECENT LEISURE-HOUR VOLUMES.

16mo. \$1.00 per volume.

314
c₂to

THE TRUMPET MAJOR.

By THOMAS HARDY.

"An exceedingly clever performance in the pleasing manner—notwithstanding the radical difference of theme and situation—of the first and best part of 'Far from the Madding Crowd.'"—*N. Y. Evening Post*.

"No man of this century except Thoreau, and no woman but George Sand, has described the 'night side' of nature better, the hours of starlight or night-glimmer in darkness which most persons never see at all, or having seen, are unable to describe. . . . The story is agreeable and interesting . . . and altogether is one of the best novels of the year now closing."—*Springfield Republican*.

ad

A DREAMER.

By KATHARINE WYLDE.

"Here is the unmistakable contagious touch of genuine feeling, worth volumes of ingenuity and folios of cleverness."—*Spectator, London*.

"The judicious student of modern fiction will give the book a high and enduring place in his regard."—*Scotsman*.

BRICITTA.

By BERTHOLD AUERBACH.

"This admirable story . . . the dainty volume. This sweet and wholesome book."—*N. Y. Tribune*.

"Deserves unqualified praise. . . . It has unity, it is pure, and it is true to life.

"Auerbach's last and best novel."—*Boston Transcript*.

THE WELLFIELDS.

By JESSIE FOTHERGILL, author of "THE FIRST VIOLIN."

"Equals in interest, if it does not excel, the author's former story, 'The First Violin.'"—*Boston Transcript*.

"A genuine woman's story, and well told. . . . A good novelist."—*Springfield Republican*.

THE MUDFOG PAPERS, Etc.

By CHARLES DICKENS, author of "THE PICKWICK PAPERS," etc.
Now first collected and reprinted.

"In that wonderful mental development which Dickens showed, these minor work show how observant was the younger man, and even in the first dashings-off of his pen there is really a great deal of that art, perhaps innate, which is all the truer because it is concealed. There is a good laugh in many a page of this book, however; more than that, the power of observance is so great, the man's eyes are so much around him that he sees sometimes into the future. He is both comic and prophetic. Take this book and give it to a lad of 15, and try him with it, and he is a dullard if it does not tickle his fancy, and he were morose, indeed, if the room does not ring with his honest hearty laughter."—*N. Y. Times*.

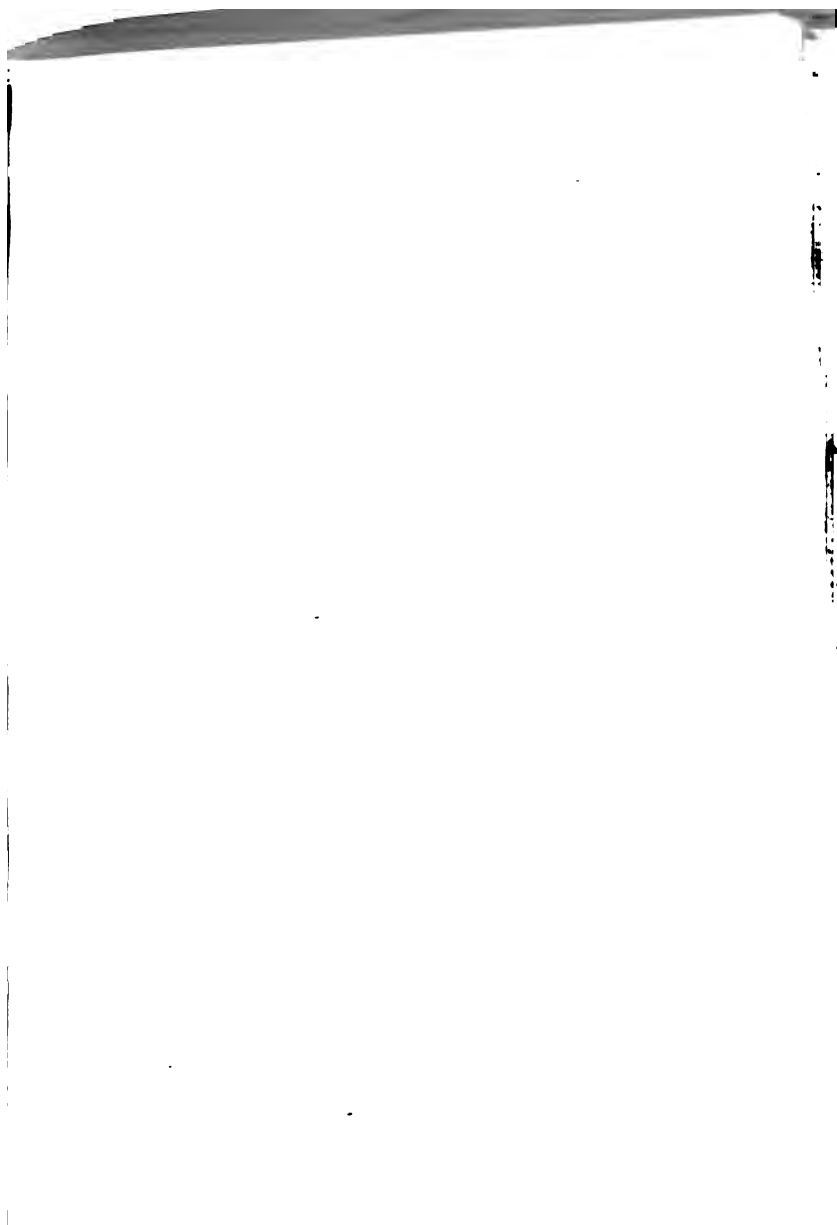
TROUBLESOME DAUGHTERS.

By L. B. WALFORD, author of "MR. SMITH," etc.

"A fresher, prettier, more unpretentious story than 'Troublesome Daughters' is not to be found, and Mrs. Walford deserves cordial recognition of the growing strength of her hand."—*N. Y. Tribune*.

"As much above the average novel as spring water is above croton."—*N. Y. Herald*

HENRY HOLT & CO., Publishers, 12 East 23d St., N. Y.



LEISURE HOUR SERIES.—No. 121

THE LEADEN CASKET

A NOVEL

BY

MRS. ALFRED W. HUNT



NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1881

21-128.27.5

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
FROM THE LIBRARY OF
MRS. ELLEN HAVEN ROSS
JUNE 28, 1938

AUTHOR'S EDITION.

COPYRIGHT BY HENRY HOLT & CO., 1881.

 The author has availed herself of the collaboration of an American friend in preparing this edition, with reference to American standards.

THE LEADEN CASKET.

CHAPTER I.

—but this is fixt
As are the roots of earth and base of all.
Man for the field, and woman for the hearth:
Man for the sword, and for the needle she:
Man with the head, and woman with the heart:
Man to command, and woman to obey;
All else confusion.—TENNYSON.

DR. RICHARD CALVERLEY BROOKE, of 350 Harley Street, was driving home one fine May evening, and had all but reached his destination, when he received a considerable mental shock. He had been running his daily stage of duty since seven o'clock that morning, and now, worn out by this long strain on his clinical sagacity, was lying back in his brougham, when it stopped abruptly, checked by a little crowd collected outside his own door. Perceiving where he was, he got out of his carriage with medical celerity, rapped vigorously at the knocker, and then, to beguile the time, turned to see what was going on in the street. His vantage-ground of five or six steps of elevation above the roadway enabled him to see an Italian organ-grinder, who was at one moment gesticulating wildly, and calling upon heaven, earth, and all around to witness that he had a right either to make music, or be paid to leave off; the next playing a few frantic snatches of the street melody of the day; then stopping to gesticulate once more, and again dashing at the implement of music and whirling around the handle to prove that he meant to maintain his rights. But with

whom was he disputing?—for all the dingy little knot of bystanders looked either stolidly indifferent, or merrily amused. The dense crowd broke asunder, and the second party in the dispute was made visible. This was an energetic, bright-eyed, and handsome little girl of eight; but that was not all, for she was Dr. Richard Brooke's own niece. He, after his hard day's work, was coming home to rest and quiet, and the steady pursuit of respectability in his dismal brick house in this cynosure of medical eyes, Harley Street, and he was met by such a spectacle as this! He had only a few years ago gained the footing which he was now striving hard to keep—and the subtle aroma of respectability was ready enough to fly away from him, and here was his own niece, who was to him as his own daughter, alone in the open street, amongst these ragamuffins, bareheaded, and engaged in a warm contest with an organ-grinder! The child, finding that she was no longer penned in by the crowd, dashed up the steps to her uncle, who hastily glanced round at the windows near to see if the magnates of the street had witnessed this escapade, and then huddled her into the house as quickly as he could. "Olive, you naughty child!" cried he, "what is the meaning of this?" And as the child did not speak quickly enough, he turned to the man-servant and said, "And you, John, I wonder you allow such things to be done; and your nurse, Olive, where is she?"

Olive looked too much afraid to answer. John spoke instead: "I was out on an errand, sir, but I have not been away five minutes; and nurse, sir, has gone to the London Library for Mrs. Brooke, sir, for some books of reference."

"But, Olive," said Dr. Brooke, turning impatiently from his man, "I think you yourself, even if alone, might know better than to misconduct yourself so. What can have made you do such a thing?"

Olive, prettier than ever, with her flashing eyes and bright color, hung her head a moment, then, seeing her uncle throw himself down in a chair as if quite tired out, she crept up to his side, laid her head on his shoulder,

and said, "I will tell you all about it, uncle; but please don't be angry with me. I will never do it any more, so you know you need not be angry unless you like."

She quite understood the nature of a perfect pardon, and her uncle saw that she did so, and said, "Well, I won't be angry. I see that you will never do this again."

"Never. But was I really so very naughty this time? Nurse was out, so I was with aunt upstairs, and she was writing, and thinking, and working so hard, and just then all at once that great nasty organ came and began to make its music, and Aunt Selina got cross with it, and at last she could not write at all. She tried ever so hard to go on, but it was of no use; she could not get a single thought up. So she threw down her pen and told me to go and order some one to send that horrid machine away, and to tell the man that if he did not move on quickly he should go to prison for a whole fortnight. But nurse was out, and Betsey was getting baby to sleep and scolded me for going near her, and John was out, and cook said she was not fit to go to the front door, and I couldn't find out where Agnes was, and I knew poor aunt was getting worse and worse all the time; so I just ran to the door myself, and opened it and peeped out, and there was no one outside then but the organ-man, and he did not look very cross; so I went to him, and told him quite quietly that I liked his music myself, but that my aunt did not, and so he must be so good as to go away at once, for as long as he was there I was quite sure she could not get one good thought up. I did not say one word about putting him in prison—that might have been enough to vex him—but I never said it. Now, was I really naughty?"

Dr. Brooke kissed the anxious face, and said, "You should not have gone out, Olive; but you promise me never to do it again. What did he say?"

"Oh, he got cross and noisy, and jumped about again, and I tried to explain that he could go somewhere else and play to persons who liked his kind of music; and then all at once I found I was shut in by a crowd of rude

strangers, who would not let me get out, and kept saying, 'Go it, little un! Go it!' and then you came."

"Poor little darling!" he said, taking her in his arms. "You are a good little girl, after all. Tell me what you have been doing all day."

"I did some lessons in the morning with Miss Dawson, and then—"

"Did you do them well?"

"Yes, she said so—all but the sums, but I can't do sums well, they seem as if they cracked me all over somehow! Let me give them up. Only, then I shall have no lessons. I don't call the others lessons—I like them. After Miss Dawson went away, nurse and I and Alick and Lucy, we went out, but not for a real walk, you know, for nurse went to pay the books and buy things, and we never seemed to get out of shops of some kind or other all the time we were out, and then I had my dinner, and after that a good read, and then this bad thing happened."

"Never mind, Olive, I forgive you," said Dr. Brooke, who could not bear to see her distressed face. "What did you read?"

"I finished the 'Mysteries of Udolpho.' It is rather a ghosty, frightening book, isn't it, uncle? Now I want you to advise me whether I better read 'St. Clair of the Isles,' 'Fatherless Fanny,' or 'Humphrey Clinker.' They all sound nice!"

"Good Heavens, child! What can your aunt be about?"

"You may always guess that," replied Olive, mistaking him. "She is writing—that's what auntie is always doing."

"And leaving house and children to go to ruin," thought Dr. Brooke, while he put Olive down and went to his wife's room upstairs.

It was a comfortable study, reclaimed from the bedroom department of the house, with a large writing-table in the middle of it, covered with masses of blue scribbling-paper, sheaves of pens, piles of manuscript. In a comfortable chair by this table sat Mrs. Brooke with hair pushed back and pale face, looking, in fact, as people are apt to look after a hard day of writing. She had evidently been at it

ever since breakfast, and she had not yet changed her morning dress, though dinner was nominally due in ten minutes. She was a handsome woman of thirty-eight or so, with a fine, well-formed face whose only fault was the important part the forehead played in it. It was prominent and large, and all the hair was drawn off it, and Mrs. Brooke thought its size betokened intellect of a gigantic order, though her husband threw the whole weight of his professional experience into the maintenance of the opinion that the height of a forehead was no index to the amount of brains of its possessor. Mrs. Brooke was writing busily when he entered, and only said, "Well, dear Richard, it is you, is it? If you have anything to say, I will speak to you in five minutes."

"I want to talk now, Selina—"

"Not now—just wait one moment, or you will spoil one of my heroine's best speeches. I'll tell you about it. You remember the story? Well, her aunt, Mrs. Nettleship, has just heard that Mr. Clement Disney—you remember that he is my hero, don't you?—"

"Tut, tut, tut, Selina, do let them all rest for one moment," said Dr. Brooke; "I must have a few words with you—"

"Can you not wait five minutes, or till the evening? that's better—I never write in the evening—"

"No, it must be now! I—"

"That is always the way!" murmured Mrs. Brooke; "and then people wonder how it is that, whilst women claim to be the equals of men, they have never produced any geniuses of the first rank, just as if women ever had any chance of doing any really good work! How can they produce good work? From early morning until late evening they have to give their minds to household matters of the most trivial and wearisome kind! No man would stand such a life for a day; but women have to endure it, and then, just as by hard thought and clever contrivance they have conquered one little half hour for themselves and their work, and are sitting down to it quite delighted, in comes some servant with, 'Oh, if you please, mum, could

I speak to you for one moment?' or, worse still, their own husband demands five minutes' conversation! And I know, Richard—I am sure, it is something disagreeable that you want to talk about, and that ruins one's best thoughts so."

"My dear love," said Dr. Brooke, "I could have said all I had to say in less time than you have taken over that long speech!"

"I never was diffuse, dear! You know that Mr. Charterley's reader, when he returned my last novel to me, said that, though it was not quite what they liked to publish, still, the style was remarkably clear and pointed; and the reader for 'Temple Bar' said the same thing."

"I wish to Heaven," cried Dr. Brooke, "you would give up all this writing and go about your housekeeping as other people do."

"As other people do! Now, Richard, isn't that just the least bit hard? If I were like other people, you might say that. But I did hope that you thought I was a little different—that I might do some good work some day."

"Good work! Selina, you will drive me wild. Surely you must see that your work ought to be keeping your house in order and looking after your children?"

"I do my very best with both house and children, not because such work is congenial to me, but because it is my duty; but when all is well set a-going, Richard, surely I may have the time to myself which other women spend in visiting?"

There was some force in that argument, but then there must be some deficiency in Mrs. Brooke's power of setting things well a-going.

"You should not send your nurses on errands when they ought to be attending to the children. They ought all to have been in the park this lovely afternoon—no wonder they look pale."

"So they ought," replied Mrs. Brooke; "I must speak about that. It is not my fault that they were not, for they have my distinct orders to go out every afternoon when it is not raining; and if Pritchard was out doing an er-

rand for me, Betsey was in, and she ought to have taken them—”

“But you ought to go to your nursery and see for yourself that your servants obey you. You ought to—”

“Now, dear Richard, you are talking just like a man! What comfort would you have if I was always running here and there to see if this or that servant was doing her duty? Do they any of them do their duty? Is it likely they should? But they do something towards it sometimes, if you only let them alone! They will not stand being looked after; they would all go away in a moment if I followed them about, as you seem to wish me to do. Mothers who are constantly in the nursery are always losing their nurses—”

“But they generally keep their children,” said Dr. Brooke, dryly; “and your first duty is to look after them.”

“Richard, I do look after them.”

“I found Olive alone in the street to-day wrangling with an organ-grinder! Do you call that looking after your children? Olive while with us is just as much our child as the rest of them. Is that respectable? I have a very hard, up-hill fight, and am likely to have it, too, for some time to come; but I do my work as well as I can, and I think you ought to do yours.”

“Now, Richard,” said Mrs. Brooke, at last laying down her pen, and looking at him as if touched to the heart, “for once, dear, you are unjust. You could not have said a more unkind thing to me than that, for you must know that the only thing which keeps me slaving and toiling day after day at my writing in this way, is that I have such a strong wish to help you. I don’t do it a bit out of vanity, or desire to shine; it is all for you. I know that you have a hard struggle, but if I could earn six or seven hundred a year—and most novel-writers who get on earn far more than that—well, then, that would surely be helping you in the very best way I could.”

“If I might only choose what kind of help I should best like, it would be—well, looking after your house. Of course, dear,” he continued, for he was wretchedly un-

comfortable at the very thought of giving her pain, "it is very good and kind of you to try to help me, but—"

"Don't say but; be patient with me for a while. Mr. Chatterley would have taken my last novel, I know, and have given me something for it too, if only that horrible war had not been going on. He said he could not publish anything that was not about the war, that nobody would read anything else; and somehow or other that is always the way with my MSS. He always seems to like them, but there is always something or other going on which prevents his venturing to publish what I send him. You see, imaginary convulsions of society—which are the things I attempt to depict—strike people as very tame in the midst of great national upheavals:—such as this war which is going on now," she added, for her husband was silent in wonder at her blindness as to the true nature of Mr. Chatterley's polite excuses. "But I am all right now: this present novel will be ready to print by the time the war is over, and I am getting on so well with it. Sit down, Richard dear, and let me read you a capital bit I wrote this morning, it is not long."

"May I ask if we are going to have any dinner to-day, Selina? It is twenty minutes past—"

"That is the worst of men," said Mrs. Brooke meditatively; "you can never take them quite out of themselves. I don't believe there is a man in all England capable of forgetting his dinner hour, or that he has a stomach, let one read what one will to him!"

"By George, no! I should think not," said her husband heartily.

"I know," said Mrs. Brooke mournfully, "I know; but never mind, dear; it does not stop my loving you."

"Well, I am going to my dinner," said Dr. Brooke, for he saw that he had no chance of getting any talk with his wife while all her MSS. were laying about.

After dinner was over, Dr. Brooke again approached the subject next his heart, and said in the most direct manner, "I wish to inform you, Selina, that when I came home to dinner to-day, your niece Olive, whom I look on as my own child, was in the street battling with a dis-

reputable Italian organ-grinder." He purposely exaggerated slightly for the sake of inducing his wife to lend her ears.

"How odd of you to say, 'whom I look on as my daughter'! Don't I look on her as my daughter too? And could any one be more anxious than I am to bring up that child well? I am far more careful about the management of Olive than I should be if she were really my own. You see, I know so well what stupid, silly, fidgety people her poor dear father and mother are;—so particular about trifles and appearances and that kind of nonsense! And she was out in the street, you say? Well, all that I can say is, that she was a very naughty girl."

"And all the windows were crowded with people looking on at the Brooke family disgracing themselves, and thinking we must be the queerest people in London! Why, I would not have had such a thing happen on any account! It is enough to ruin my practice!"

"Perhaps she had better go to school," said Mrs. Brooke thoughtfully.

"You know my opinion of schools," growled the doctor.

"Well, could she not go out in the carriage with you sometimes?" asked the lady; "that would do her good and keep her quiet."

"Do you remember my taking her out once, and she wetted little bits of paper, and stuck them all over the carriage windows while I was with a patient?"

"I can't think what makes her so different from other children," murmured Mrs. Brooke.

"Most people would say that it was because she has no one to look after her."

"Really, Richard, how you talk! It is not my fault that her parents live in India: I do my very best to supply their place. Did I not bring her here into my room to-day—just when I was writing a critical bit too? And I let her sit reading in a corner by the window for a couple of hours, until that unfortunate organ came."

"Reading! What was she reading?" cried Dr. Brooke, who remembered another grievance.

"Well, dear, I hardly know; she was quiet, and that is the main thing; and as for books, she likes best to choose them for herself."

"And she chose the 'Mysteries of Udolpho' and 'Humphrey Clinker'!"

"Dear me! poor child, did she? If she could only read writing quickly, I am sure she should read my manuscript."

"Selina, my dear, you are a fool! You really are, to talk in that way; and unless you mean to change very much, and devote yourself henceforth to the children, I must at any rate take Olive from you. I can't help you ruining your own children, but I cannot let you ruin Chesterfield's."

"Where would you send her?" inquired Mrs. Brooke very calmly; she knew that her intellect was quite above suspicion, and was therefore not in the least offended by her husband calling her a fool.

"To my mother and sister. I have no doubt they would take her; but if you have the heart of a woman, you won't let her go."

"I do love the child, I love her dearly, and should hate to part with her."

"Keep her at home, then, and look after her."

"But one has to make great sacrifices for art."

Dr. Brooke's lip curled a little.

"Well, give me a little time to think it over," said Mrs. Brooke, and a silence of about an hour ensued. Then she said, "If you think the dear child would be happy at Austerfield with your mother and sister, she had better go—not for long, of course, but for six months or so, until I get this novel, which I am busy with, out of my hands—for really, Richard I should not be happy if I gave it up. You see, I have been buoying myself up so with the idea of coming to your room some morning and handing you a check for a thousand pounds all earned by my own work. Oh! I should be so proud that day; and you know yourself that many a woman earns quite as much as that just by one book, so why should not I?"

"Do as you think best," said Dr. Brooke rather roughly, for he did not at all want to lose sight of the child. "You shall have your own way, but it seems to me that you are turning your back upon a plain duty and pursuing a shadow."

"I wonder whether he would change his opinion at all if I quoted Plato, and he found he was on my side," thought Mrs. Brooke, who for the last minute had been repeating to herself a bit from *Lysis* which seemed to suit the situation:—"The education of children of great men is often neglected: indeed, if people are to be great, they can only attend to their own development."

After a while Mrs. Brooke persuaded her husband to listen to a long chapter fresh from her pen that very day. It was part of a tissue of troubles, each and all of which would have faded away if any of the actors in the story could have brought themselves to speak two words of common sense—only, if they had done so, what would have become of the poor lady's plot? Dr. Brooke did not want her to write novels, so he listened in patient weariness. Great was his weariness, but great also were the recuperative efforts of nature in his favor: very soon he was fast asleep. His escape into dreamland was never discovered, for just as Mrs. Brooke was about to look up to see whether her husband's face was illumined with interest, they were both alarmed by a succession of agonized shrieks from the night nursery. They ran up in all haste, and there they found Olive, who, having used all the time which they had spent in dining in reading "*Melmoth the Wanderer*" by the light of the drawing-room fire, had worked herself up into such a state of excitement and terror that she refused to be left alone even for a moment.

"This decides me," said Dr. Brooke, after they had succeeded in pacifying her; "that child shall go to Austerfield by the first train on Monday morning. I'll take her there myself. After all, my own children, poor things, won't take much harm if they are neglected a little longer, but Olive is just at the very age to be ruined for life."

And here we may as well inform the reader that Olive was the eldest child of Sir Chesterfield Brooke a distinguished Indian officer, who was now at his post as governor of a frontier province, and continually occupied in repelling petty insurrections and incursions. Olive had never been in India, and could not remember ever having seen her father. She had been left in England as too delicate for the journey, and, having thus missed the chance of spending the early years of her life in that country, was now condemned to wait for a sight of her father and mother until she grew old enough to bear the Indian climate, or Sir Chesterfield resigned his appointment and came home.

To Olive these Indian parents were vague abstractions. The father and mother she knew and loved lived in Harley Street.

CHAPTER II.

Nor did he give them teachers, but they were allowed to wander at their own free will in a sort of hope that they would light on virtue of their own accord.—PROTAGORAS.

WHEN Monday came, Dr. Brooke found that it was quite impossible for him to leave town, so little Olive was sent down to Austerfield with a servant, and he was obliged to content himself with embodying in a long letter all the prohibitions and ordinances which he had devised for the child's governance. This letter was addressed to his elder sister, Miss Lettice Brooke, who lived with her infirm father and mother in this far-away Yorkshire village. He wished Olive to learn a few simple lessons, to read a few childish books,—which, from his recollection of the book-shelves of his youth, he had no difficulty in specifying,—and to run about the Grange gardens and fields in happy healthful freedom. All novel-reading was henceforth to be rigorously denied her. No late hours were to be permitted, her life was to be entirely simple, her mind was to be stimulated only as a child's mind should be, by

Nature's daily show of wonders. He did not hesitate to confide to his sister his reasons for removing Olive from her aunt's care, and as he knew Miss Lettice's easy-going, indulgent character, he made a great point of telling her how seriously harmful Olive's course of reading had been both to her mind and body, declaring that he really believed that they should have lost the child if she had been allowed to go on in the same way much longer. Miss Lettice replied at once, and even went beyond the doctor in her condemnation of all that he condemned. Her dear brother might rely on her constant watchfulness and care. Novels were most improper and dangerous things for children—indeed, as for that matter, for grown-up people too. There was no one who would not be the better for letting them alone, and her dear brother might trust her to obey him in this as in everything else.

Dr. Brooke did trust her, and Olive went and arrived at her grandfather's house late in the evening, when the air was golden with sunset. She saw the pretty old Grange which was now to be her home, with eyes full of amazement. It looked strange after the dingy magnificence of London. It was a handsome old house in its way; and had belonged to the Brooke family for centuries, but it was low and unlike anything she had ever seen before. There were only two tiers of rooms in all, and the windows were rather small and half-hidden by Jargonelle pear-trees; the purply-gray roof was diversified by splendid patches of yellow stone-crop and house-leek, and here and there a tuft of wall-flowers, or crimson snapdragons. It was a dignified-looking abode, and the rooms were large and picturesque; but Olive wondered at its want of height, and felt sure that there was some mistake about it, for the stairs were so short that you were at the top of the house before you seemed to have begun to go up. She was met by a pretty, pleasant old lady who told her that she was her Aunt Lettice, and taken into a room where her grandfather and grandmother were sitting. They looked much older than any one whom Olive had ever seen before, but the long journey had dulled her powers of astonishment, and

she made no opposition to the general dictum that bed was by far the best place for her. She was conducted to the spare room, and, lost in depths of downy feathers, soon folded eyes and limbs to rest.

When she awoke next morning, the birds were singing in the pear-tree which was trained round her window, the lately formed brownish-red pears looked pertly full of promise; the sun was shining on the branching pines which composed the pattern of the chintz of which the hangings of her bed were made—pines on which blue-gray paraquets were perched at measured intervals, some in grave, ruminating discontent, some with inquisitive necks stretched to watch other birds like themselves fluttering down to settle on the branch by their side. Such movement was there amongst these—such life, such expectation, and all for an object which to the end of time would be unattainable! “Stupid birds!” thought Olive, “how I wish you would get flown! Making such a fuss, and never getting one bit nearer the place you want to go to! I don’t like you, I like the quiet settled ones best.” And then she remembered that restful and restless birds had alike been fixed and woven into the web where their part was to be played, and began to wonder if she, too, were so made that she could but do her work in life according to the instincts with which she had been born, and use the measure of power which had from the beginning been meted out to her. They called her naughty at home in Harley Street, and little Alick her cousin good, because she sometimes got out of bed and stole to an upstairs window to see the sun rise, and caught cold, while Alick refused to go when she summoned him, and quietly stayed in bed. “But,” thought she, “I want to see sunrises so much that when the sky looks pink I seem as if I must go where I can see more of it, and Alick is different; he cares nothing about them.”

Olive’s attempts to do her part towards solving the problems of “fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,” might have ended in giving her a bad headache if she had not suddenly caught sight of a large glass-doored book-case which nearly filled the entire side of the room. Large as

it was, it was crowded from base to summit with books. Joy filled her heart, and she was out of bed in a moment to read their names. Their names! It was a novel-reader's paradise! There was scarcely a single book in the whole collection which she did not long to devour. Their mere titles were a feast in themselves: "Cœlebs in Search of a Wife;" "The Romance of the Forest;" "Manfrone, the One-handed Monk" (these, alas! on a very high shelf); "The Pirate;" "Zeleuco;" "The Red Rover," and "The Water Witch." Swift as thought, she got a chair, opened the glass door, took out an old calf-bound volume with an attractive name, and began to enjoy the pictures in it. One represented an affrighted maiden overhearing a villain of most repulsive appearance make a confession of some past act of wickedness to an equally unpleasant-looking companion. The eyes of the latter were starting from his head at the magnitude of the crime which had just been revealed to him. Thus ran the fragment of the novel which had been extracted to explain the illustration: "Ela listened and heard the monk exclaim, 'Thou indeed stolest the son, but this, this is the daring hand which administered the fatal draught to the father.'" "Ah!" sighed Olive, but her sigh was but a long-drawn-out expression of content—a feeding by anticipation on the sweets of that volume. Her next impulse was to begin at once to read, but even at the tender age of eight and a half, the little maiden had attained to the degree of experience which prompted the exclamation, "If they have got so far as to tell that, this must be the third volume." So she began to look for the first.

Suddenly she felt an arm put round her and a kiss on her cheek, and heard a kind voice say, 'But, Olive, you ought not to be standing about in your night-dress; and none of these are suitable books for you.'

"Aren't they, Aunt Lettice?" said Olive with a face full of distress. "Oh, dear! What a pity!"

When Miss Lettice saw the change which had come over the child's face, her soft heart was touched in a moment. "Well," said she, "perhaps I might find one or two amongst them which you may read. Don't be so

anxious, dear child; I'll look and tell you. Did your uncle say anything to you about what books you were to read?"

"He said I was not to read anything without asking your permission, and, Aunt Lettice, I am very sorry, but I am afraid I forgot. I was just going to read this when you came in—"

"But you will keep your promise, Olive?" inquired Miss Lettice appealingly.

"Of course I will. Even if I hadn't made a promise, I wouldn't do anything to vex uncle if I could help it—no, not for the world!" And Olive stoutly replaced the book which had tempted her so much. Still, she could not take her eyes off it. Suddenly she cried eagerly, "But, Aunt Lettice, you will tell me, won't you, what other things Ela heard those two men say to each other while she was listening, and what she did about it when she got away? It is not very safe for her to be so near them as she is. I should not like it. I suppose she is not afraid, and that that is what makes her fit to be a heroine." And Olive sighed over her own shortcomings.

"It is all a pack of lies!" cried Miss Lettice with great decision. "Olive, I could not tell you the story of that book if I tried forever. I would if I could, but I always forget what I read, an hour after I have shut the book." This was an assertion which Miss Lettice was in the habit of making. It served her as an excuse for never opening any book which was not a novel. "It was so disrespectful," she said, "to forget a good book so quickly, that she really did not like to begin to read one."

"Have you quite forgotten everything about it?" inquired Olive. "Is there nothing you can remember to tell me?"

"Not one word. I am very sorry, little Olive, but the whole thing has gone out of my mind as completely as if it had never been in it. Perhaps," added she, seeing the child's disconsolate face, "perhaps I should not be doing so very wrong to let you read this one book—just this one. It is very short, and has pictures, and it is my fault for forgetting the story. I should have told it to you if I could have remembered it, and there is not much differ-

ence in telling it to you and letting you read it yourself; so I think you may as well keep it out. But mind," she continued, half repenting this concession, "you must not tease me to let you read one of the other books, for I have given a promise to your uncle, and, you see, a promise is such a very sacred thing."

"I had better not read this, perhaps," said Olive, hesitatingly.

"Oh yes, you may read that. I have told you you may, and it was to be as I thought best: but no more—not one more. You will find me very strict about these things, Olive. I told your uncle I should be so."

"Oh," cried Olive in some triumph, "but I have read ever so many of the books in this book-case already! I have read 'The Mysteries of Udolpho,' on this first shelf; and 'The Children of the Abbey,' and 'St. Clair of the Isles,' and 'The Cottage on the Cliff,' on the one above; and 'Melmoth,' and 'Tremaine,' and 'The Castle of Otranto,' and I dare say ever so many more."

"Dear me! Well, I should not have advised your being allowed to read those books—I certainly should not; but if you have read them once you may read them again, for no doubt you have got all the harm out of them you can get; so when you want a book, Olive, you may just take one of those which you have read already. But no new ones, mind you, not one! You are not to ask me. And, oh dear, if you are not standing all this time with your poor bare little feet, and nothing on but your night-dress, and that is a thing I am so very particular about! Jump down, and I'll send Hannah at once. She will help you to dress, and then come quickly down. There is some new milk, warm from the cow, waiting for you."

"I wonder what that is," was Olive's thought, but she was ashamed to show her ignorance by asking.

"You may run about as you like," said Aunt Lettice after breakfast, "but your uncle does not wish you to be allowed to play with the village children; if you see any of them about, take no notice of them. You won't see them unless you go to some of the gates."

Olive, however, wanted no playfellows this first day. She had kingdoms, empires, new worlds to discover and explore, and hour after hour passed in entrancing bewilderment. She did not give much thought to the human occupants of the Grange and its gardens. She roamed here and there, and at first it was pleasure enough to pry into the recesses of folded leaves or cuplike flowers where the sun had not yet pierced its way, and to force the lurking dew-drops to run to seek their fellows; and merrily she laughed when, after a little helpless tumbling about on leaf, or petal, two drops as round as the  of Giotto bumped against each other and slowly and heavily rolled into one. When she was tired of that, she divided the garden into the four quarters of the world. She peopled them with imaginary inhabitants of all kinds, distributing these with as much regard to her own little theory of probability as was possible. An apple orchard was the abode of giants who walked about with heads high above the fruit-trees, and when the fruit was ripe and rosy would be able to look down on the best and brightest of the clusters at the very top, and take what they liked for themselves. Olive was sure that the beauteous Saba, wife to St. George of England, was chained to one tree far in the depths of the orchard, and, unless rescue came, would be devoured. Sometimes as the child passed this stronghold of gianthood, she timidly listened for the clash of knightly arms; more usually she ran quickly by, lest she herself should be captured. A dense thicket of gooseberry-bushes was the hiding-place of serpents with endless lengths of coil; a bed of tender lilies of the valley sheltered fairies who climbed up the flower-stalks from bell to bell as by a delicately constructed ladder, and peered forth on the world from the highest of these tiny perfumed white tents, ready to take flight the moment any child of man appeared. After an hour or two, the whole garden was densely peopled by heroes and heroines of "The Seven Companions of Christendom," or of Madame D'Aulnoy's Tales, and Olive went reverently up and down, half overcome by the sense of the presence of these supernatural beings,

in whose existence she all but implicitly believed. She was conscious of a certain feeling of fear as well as of reverence, and ran by the lair of the deadly snakes, trembled if a leaf rustled, and half expected to see the giants towering above the apple-trees, or an enormous hand stretched forth from amongst the lichened branches. She knew "The Castle of Otranto" by heart, and was well prepared for the sight of nodding plumes at any unwonted elevation from the earth. She was familiar with corridors and subterranean passages, and with antique lamps whose slender flame expired just as the beautiful heroine or dauntless hero had become aware that he or she was no longer alone in the dark and vaulted chamber. Olive had always had a burning desire to find a concealed treasure, but never could feel that any such luck was likely to befall her in London, which was much too crowded for any one to be able to take up a paving-stone in order to hide stores of gold or jewels. Now, in the country, every broad stone which she saw laid down in field or garden seemed to her the possible covering of a treasure of dazzling rubies or diamonds, all of which would be hers by right of discovery if she could but find them: or there was the hope, the scarcely hoped-for hope, that she might live to find, to see, and have for her own, handfuls, nay, basketfuls, of the jewels, with the lovely names which it was her joy to read about in the Bible.

CHAPTER III.

Truly I would the gods had made thee poetical.—*As You Like It.*

To mark the structure of a plant or tree,
And all fair things of earth how fair they be.—CHARLES LAMB.

AFTER a fortnight had passed, Olive, who had more than once looked wistfully at various little brown-faced village children, began to pine for a companion—some one to help her to play. She confided this wish to Aunt

Lettice, and asked if she might play with Willie Morrison, the butcher's nephew. He was a little London boy on a visit to his north-country relations in the village. She had seen him pass several times; and he was a very nice gentleman-like boy, who wore a blue jacket, and not "brown ribbed things like the village boys."

"Fustian, you mean," said Miss Lettice.

"Well, fustian; but Willie Morrison does not wear it, and he looks so nice. I am sure uncle would not mind my playing with such a good-looking little boy as that."

"Well, if you think so," replied Aunt Lettice, "I am sure I don't object either. He is a good boy, I know, and it is dull for you; but you must promise me never to ask me to let you play with any of the other village children, and you must not bring Willie into the house or garden: your grandfather would not like that; and no other children, Olive, not one single one."

"Oh no; I did speak to two little girls one day—I on one side of the gate and they on the other; so you don't call that wrong, do you, auntie? And I just told them about the snakes and giants in our garden, and one ran away crying so loud you could hear her all the way to the village, and the other said I was 'a bad girl and told lies!' Weren't they stupid? But I like boys best, so never mind."

Having obtained her aunt's consent, Olive waited at the gate until Willie passed. She knew that he went down the lane every day about half-past eleven. She did not wait long. He was a frank-looking, bright-eyed boy of her own age, with a quiet, thoughtful way of looking about him, and a pale, London-bleached face. He was kicking stones along the road as any other young gentleman might have been doing, and stopping every now and then to look at anything which interested him.

"Don't go past the gate," cried Olive. "Stay and play with me."

"Girls can't play," he replied doubtfully, but with something very like a pleased smile breaking over his whole face.

"Oh, but I can," said Olive; "besides, I can tell you stories."

"With plenty of killing in them?"

"Yes, some with killing in them. But do you like stories of that kind best?"

"Yes, I like killing ones best, and murders out of the newspapers."

"I am afraid he won't do," thought Olive, "he is vulgar-minded;" then she said, "I can tell you some killing stories out of books. I don't like them in newspapers, they put such nasty bits in them, but I can tell you some which you will care far more for, out of Macaulay's Lays, and the Scottish Minstrelsy. But, where were you going?"

"To my aunt's, as far off as you can see along the lane. I go there every day with a message."

"Then you can't stay and play?"

"Ask if you may go with me."

"Well, dear," said Miss Lettice, in answer to this request, "if you feel that you could enjoy a walk, it is a sign that it would do you good to go. I think you may, for it is not far; but remember, in a general way I like you best in the fields close by, or in the garden."

After this the children were inseparable. Willie was nearly two years older than Olive, but she was mentally older than he. She soon began to be warmly attached to the boy, yet she despised him intellectually, thought his taste in literature contemptible, his aim in life wofully low, his feeling for poetry nil; but in spite of all, after a while she loved him passionately. This love was the fruit of her novel-reading. She had cultivated it from a feeling that it was time she had a real lover of her own, and that there was no one else in Austerfield to play the part. Willie was the only boy who was gentleman-like, and wore a blue jacket; all the others were clods, who were cruel, and tortured birds and butterflies, and did not even look at flowers, but spent all their holiday time in cutting sticks, or throwing stones. Willie liked flowers without much prompting from Olive, never hurt animals, and was ready to devote himself from early morning till late evening to her. This was the only proof of love he gave her, but it was unfail-

ing. Olive, who—thanks to her aunt's general benevolence to children, and slippery manipulation of promises—had since she came to Austerfield read romances enough to turn a grown-up head, and who nightly sobbed as if her heart would break over the sorrows of Emily and Valancourt in "The Mysteries of Udolpho," or of Amanda in "The Children of the Abbey,"—who was used to the kind of novel in which hero and heroine go through every probation, every misery and injustice which cruel parents, guardians, or traitorous uncles, and stony-hearted relatives can inflict, and at last come out of all, triumphant in love and happiness—would have liked some such stormy experience herself. She wanted Willie to protest his adoration. She in return would confess her love; all would go smoothly for a few weeks, during which they would keep their passion to themselves and grow nearer to each other daily; then trouble would come, and for ten or fifteen years they would neither of them know a happy moment, but bear and suffer unheard-of miseries and privations—perhaps be locked up and fed on bread and water—all which things they would go through with smiling faces and absolutely unshaken constancy. She pictured to herself the bliss of living for months with no other solace than a secretly conveyed letter, and foresaw the day when at length their Hyrcanian-tiger-hearted relatives would say that it was altogether in vain to try to part such faithful lovers—that they were made for each other, and that it was not in the power of mortal men to turn aside the decrees of fate. That is what she desired; what she had was this: every morning when it was possible to go out, Willie waited for her under a lime-tree in a very pretty field half-way between the Grange and the village. Then they walked in the fields around, making up large bunches of flowers which they loved far too well even to throw away when tired of carrying them. They learnt to know so well where each flower grew that they could have found it in the dark, and to them the budding and blossoming of the fluttering bird-cherry, or the waxlike and golden barberry, or the sight of the first long spike of lilac campanula, was an event waited and

watched for for weeks. As the year advanced, they brought home baskets of mushrooms, leaves filled with wild strawberries, or cans of blackberries, and when tired they flung themselves down by the side of a tiny beck they were very fond of, and watched the trout lying with their heads upstream, looking like semi-transparent golden-brown blots in the clear water, or the minnows flashing by in the sunshine. After two springs and summers together at Austerfield they attained a new sense with regard to birds, and found nest after nest with the instinct and precision of savages; and when winter came, that too brought its own joys. Children as they were, they never had a quarrel. Willie seemed passively happy and perfectly content to give up the direction of himself and of his days to Olive. Olive was happy, but she wanted something more. She longed to see Willie throw himself at her feet, and to hear him say, "Olive, I love you with the whole strength of a passionate nature, and without your love I die." She wondered if he did love her. He appeared to do so, for he never seemed to care to be with any one but herself. Sometimes the village boys met them, and called Willie a milk-sop, a lass-lad; but they very soon fled if he ran after them.

There was only one thing with respect to which Olive and Willie were not in perfect harmony, and that was poetry. Perhaps Miss Olive, unconsciously to herself, affected to admire things which at her age she was unable really to care for, from deference to names which she had been taught to respect. She repeated "Lycidas" to Willie (her uncle had made her learn it). Willie was bored, and said it was very fine, and there was a good deal of it, and that he did not care for poetry except, perhaps, "John Gilpin." Olive thought "John Gilpin" silly, and had a great dislike to poetry which only aimed at amusing her. Then she repeated one of Madame D'Aulnoy's fairy tales, and behold! all Willie's sympathies went with the dragons, and when they carried off wondrously beautiful princesses in mad flight through the air, his only wish was to know at what rate of speed they could fly. He was bored by "Undine," which alternately delighted and terrified Olive;

and until it occurred to her to tell him ghost stories, she could not touch him on the side of wonder at all.

She spent hours and days in planning their future life together, which was to be spent underground. Somewhere—the spot was unknown to her as yet—but somewhere, she was sure, half hidden by briars and brambles, they would find an entrance to a range of long-forgotten subterranean caverns which they would make their own—hide from the knowledge of every one, furnish stealthily, and then inhabit. There was endless food for thought and conversation in furnishing and arranging these. The carpets were to be skins of wild beasts. The rooms were to be lighted with colored lamps. There was to be a drawing-room, dining-room, and library. The library was to contain every book in the world. Willie was base enough to think of food; but food was promoted to the level of poetry when they remembered that no one must know of their existence, and that they must steal away by night to distant towns to bring back all they wanted, or Willie must take his gun and shoot in one night a provision which would last them for six months. They resolved to begin at once to save up their pocket-money to buy stores of candles, matches, gunpowder, and clothing.

“I mean,” said Olive, “to wear crimson velvet in the cave, for it will look so pretty against the dark-brown rocky walls; and you too, Willie, had better wear some color of the same kind; but we must have quite ugly, common things when we go out, so that we may pass unnoticed as mere peasants. Oh! Willie, how delightful it will be!”

“But we haven’t found our cavern yet,” observed Willie.

“We are certain to find one,” cried Olive. “The idea has come to us so strongly that you may be sure that it has not been given to us for nothing.”

“It certainly would be awfully jolly to be always going about in the dark by night!” said he.

“And so delightful to think no one knew where we were!” added Olive.

In the autumn after their first meeting, Willie had to go back to school, but he was to spend his Christmas holidays

at Austerfield. To Olive it seemed life would stand still from the moment when he left her, and she earnestly hoped that he would be equally miserable; but Willie was wanting as regarded all due expression of his grief, if indeed he felt any. To him the knowledge that he was coming back at Christmas seemed a sufficient reason for bearing up in the interval, and when he spoke of his return to London he dwelt principally on the fact that he hated learning lessons.

"But, Willie, won't you miss me, and our walks and talks?"

"Yes, of course; but mind, by that time it would be getting very cold for us to sit out."

Olive would have sat down contentedly on the highest peak of frosty Caucasus, if she could but have had Willie by her side, and a tear rose to her eyes at his speech; but she did not choose to let him see it, and hiding her face for the moment, she said, "We will be happy at Christmas."

"Yes, that's a very jolly time. I like being here then, grandmother does make such awfully good Yule cakes! Does your aunt have them made with sultana raisins or the others?"

For a minute Olive perfectly hated him; to show her indifference she said, "Oh, no doubt she has them made good somehow, but I dare say I shall have to go to my own home at Christmas, so I shall neither see you nor the cakes."

"Oh, but if you are not here, Olive, I don't want to come," exclaimed Willie, who had so completely surrendered the conduct of his existence to Olive that he could not conceive life in Austerfield without her. She was content with that, and just on the point of saying, "Then you do love me, Willie, in spite of the bad speeches you make to me," but she was shy, and sat in silence wondering how she was to get through the weeks which must pass before Christmas came.

When she bade Willie good-by, she was pleased to see that he looked very much troubled about leaving, though

shy of showing it. She slipped into his hand her own best-bound favorite book, in which with a very bad pen she had blotted his name. "It is for you, Willie," she said, with quivering voice, "and you must not forget me."

"I am not likely to forget you, Olive—it is only eleven weeks—"

Olive shivered; that speech was one which might be interpreted in two ways and both disagreeable.

"Well, good-by, Olive, don't you forget me, or my rabbits either. You will see that they feed them, if your aunt will let you go; and mind, it is very bad to give them wet cabbage."

"We ought to kiss each other when we say good-by, Willie," said Olive, for he was going after shaking hands with her. So, awkwardly enough, he gave her a limp, shapeless kind of kiss and went, while Olive, who had struggled to bear up until now, broke out into the most passionate agony of grief that she had ever known. To hide her tear-stained face she retreated to the hay-loft. There she stayed for hours uttering bitter complaints against destiny for separating her from Willie, against Willie for being so contemptibly small-natured as to part with no sign of pain from one who had been all in all to him for six whole months. She would eat no dinner, read no book, listen to no comfort, and when night came she went to bed thinking that every day of the next eleven weeks must be spent in equal wretchedness—how could it be otherwise when Willie was away? She did fret next day, but in the evening she condescended to join the family circle, and there she heard something which comforted her and restored her love to the dignity of a faith. Mr. Begbie, the clergyman of the parish, was talking to her Aunt Lettice about the difference in the nature of girls and boys. "Girls," he said, "are little women almost from the beginning; boys, dull, stupid, blundering creatures, who till the age of seventeen or eighteen can neither express nor know the feelings which govern them."

"That's it!" thought Olive. "Willie loves me so deep

in his heart that he can't go burrowing down to see how much, but he loves me and I love him." She doubted his love no longer, but wofully missed his company, and hung about looking so dull and listless, that even her poor old grandmother, aged eighty-one, saw that she was ill, and therefore out of love with life and its enjoyments.

"Nay," cried Miss Lettice, when she saw Olive's pale face and her red eyes, "but this is the road to no place; you are fairly killing yourself for want of something sensible to do! You shall go to school to-morrow morning, as sure as my name is Lettice Brooke."

Her name was Lettice Brooke, and next morning Olive went to the village school, with a special recommendation to the master who kept it to place her at some distance from the village children. She was, therefore, put at the end of the bench just below his own desk, so that he might conveniently check all approach to inappropriate friendships by keeping her under his own eyes.

She was so completely under his eyes that when her spirits returned he found he saw a great deal more than he had bargained for: caricatures of himself which did not tend to feed his vanity; portraits of nearly every one in the school; verses, chiefly sentimental—any art and every art received its share of attention, but the right one. Sums still "cracked" Olive, but after a very short time there was so marked an improvement in that respect that the master was astonished. It was all due to Aunt Lettice, who kept the child so well supplied with pocket-money that she was able to buy taffy to bribe the big boys to do her arithmetic for her, which carried her triumphantly over the four simple rules, and landed her with distinguished honor in the rule of three.

At Christmas, just as Olive expected to see Willie again, she was summoned back to London. She wrote a short note of misery, spelt misery, to him, and then went home, and was remarkably happy there. Her rosy cheeks delighted her uncle, and her sympathy with novel-writing charmed her aunt.

"We will keep that dear child at home with us, now

that we have got her," said Dr. Brooke; "the house is twice as delightful to me when it has her bright little face in it."

"Oh yes, do let us keep her," said Mrs. Brooke; "she is no trouble whatever. I believe she sat for two whole hours writing this morning, without disturbing me once."

"Letters, or what, poor little thing?"

"She was writing what she calls her novel. She took a few sheets of letter-paper, and cut them into squares, and then scribbled away as contentedly as possible. I can't tell you in the least what it was all about—her style may be clear, but I am sure her writing is not."

"Selina, you are determined to ruin that child! I won't allow this writing—it is the worst thing possible."

"It will get her insensibly into the habit of composition."

"I'll not allow it! I don't want her to compose. I should look on it as the greatest misfortune which could befall her if she took to anything of the kind."

"Well, dear," replied Mrs. Brooke quite composedly, "be easy; if I write well, it is very unlikely that Olive will have the talent also."

CHAPTER IV.

Only my love's away,
I'd as lief the blue were gray.—R. BROWNING.

IT was not long before Olive was sent back to Austerfield. "After all, she gets health there," thought Dr. Brooke with a sigh, when he parted from her. "It is astonishing how soon she lost her pretty color after she came back here." Willie's father, a clerk in a city bank, with a small salary and a delicate wife, was also glad enough to consign his boy to the care of a devoted grandmother, and know that, while he himself was living between the dingy bank in Threadneedle Street and the small and depressing house in Hanway Town, his boy was having the run of woods and fields, and enjoying pure country air.

The grandparents of both Olive and Willie made them go every morning to the village school from nine till twelve. The rest of the day was, however, their own, and dearly they enjoyed it. They were as inseparable as ever, the only difference being that their talk was a little less childish, and their walks were a little longer. They passed many an hour in the churchyard, which stretched along side by side with the Grange garden. Olive was fond of showing her skill in deciphering black-letter inscriptions and telling pathetic stories about every one with a pretty name who lay there. She credited the plain John Browns and Jane Smiths with lives as dull as their names. Each child passed the black tombstones with a shudder of horror faintly tempered by pity; they thought good people were buried under white tombstones and the wicked under black ones, and the black ones were in Austerfield churchyard sadly too frequent.

Near the church porch was the old stone coffin of one of the Neville family. In this the children used to sit making wreaths of flowers, or resting from their rambles, and sometimes, in grim play, one of them lay down to try to fit a little living head into the round hole which had once held the dead one. "If you and I had really been buried in a coffin like this, Willie, hundreds of years ago—" began Olive.

"—We should not be sitting here now," interrupted Willie.

"No, no, I don't mean that; we should have a great flat stone lid above us, with our pictures carved on it, both of us lying side by side, and we should have a lap-dog to put our feet on, and a cushion for our heads, and you would have a sword by your side to show that you were a knight, and I should have a pair of scissors."

"But how do you know I should have been a knight?"

"Oh, of course you would—I should not have known you if not!" And then she remembered, what had been a great source of pleasure to her for some time, that, as it was, Willie was very much below her in station, and that when the time came to tell her family that they loved each other

and meant to marry, there would be a terrible outburst of wrath. Doctor and Mrs. Brooke, as well as her father and mother, would all be sure to act in such a way as to afford Olive a most enviable opportunity of showing the stuff of which she was made; and she would show it! No one who ever yet lived in this world should eclipse her in constancy, patience, and fidelity. She was silent for some time, her mind busy with the great question—how would her father receive Willie? Suddenly a thought struck her, and her only wonder was that it had never occurred to her before. Suppose Willie was not what he seemed? In almost all the novels she had ever read, heroes who began life as peasants of a superior make turned out to be the eldest sons of dukes in the third volume. How odd it would be if that were the case with him, and the inferiority of rank were on her side! But while she was still struggling with this great idea, he said, "I can't play with you this afternoon, Olive; I am going to Bishopston with my uncle on the pony. It will be awfully jolly," said he, seeing a look of dismay in her face, and perhaps wanting to talk down any objections which she was going to raise. "I am to have uncle's pony, and he is going to ride Mr. Thompson's mare, and he has promised to gallop whenever I like; and if he has only got time enough after he has done all his business at market, he means to take me to see the wild beasts' show. I wish you could go, Olive; it would be twice as nice if you were there too!"

Olive's heart swelled.

"There's lions and tigers and an elephant, and a man puts his head in the lion's mouth, and I mean to have a ride on the elephant."

"And you are going to leave me alone, to be away a whole afternoon, for the sake of a few lions and tigers!"

"Well, but really, Olive, such beasts as that—"

"Oh, nonsense about beasts. If you go, you can't love me. If you go like that, Willie, I'll love you no more and never seek flowers with you again."

"But for once? When it would be such pleasure?"

"Would it be such pleasure?" asked Olive impetu-

ously. "Well, go then, and come back and tell me all about the beasts to-morrow. I forgot it would be such a pleasure, I wish I had not been so cross about it."

"You see, there's the ride," said Willie apologetically; "I've never had a long ride on that pony, and uncle wants me with him."

"It would be very nice, and you must go," said Olive; after which speech, she made no more objections, but nature was tinged with gloom, and all true dependence on Willie's love was gone. She was put in the scale with wild beasts and found wanting! She had all along been nothing else but a self-deceiving fool! They parted as usual at mid-day. She dined with her family, feeling no interest in mashed potatoes browned before the fire, no joy in apricot tarts decked with white kernels. Listlessly she went out to make in sad loneliness the accustomed round of the home-fields, before she went into the Camp field, or the Well-springs, or little Scrogs Wood, or Willowby Plump; for every field, every group of trees, had its name, and each had its daily visit. The first field was one next the Grange, and her grandfather's two cows were pastured in it. On a happier day Olive would have tried how long she could maintain her seat on that sharp bony ridge of Mrs. Beauty's backbone. But to-day the sleek red cow lay unmolested; Olive had no heart to play, no desire for flowers either; she could find pleasure in nothing, for Willie was not there! Besides, it was almost certain that she would have to revise and remodel the whole scheme of her future life, for what Willie had done proved him to be one to whom it would be hardly prudent to give the love of her life.

The next field was a corn-field. All the corn was cut and bound, and set up in stooks; and when she saw that this was done, two big tears ran down her cheeks, for she and Willie had settled in their own minds, when last they saw it, that it probably would be cut by this day, and they had resolved to come and, if it were so, to make themselves a house with some of the sheaves, and spend the afternoon therein. She half crossed the field, then she

could bear her loneliness no longer, and threw herself down with her back to the sheaves and had a good cry. A rustling disturbed her. She saw another group of sheaves at a little distance from her move, and from behind them crept Willie. He came to her looking bright, rosy, and affectionate, and putting his arm round her he kissed her, and said, "Don't cry, Olly; you see I did not go, after all."

This was but the second kiss the children had ever exchanged. Olive would often have kissed Willie, but, as it never seemed to occur to him to kiss her, she was too shy.

"Did you stay at home on my account?" she asked, divided between smiles and tears.

He nodded and said, "I told uncle I didn't want to go."

"Oh, Willie, and you did want!" she said this very regretfully. "But never mind, I do love you for it!" She threw her arms round his neck, and in turn kissed him, and then she sat still holding his hand in hers. "Willie, we do love each other," said she.

Willie looked at her with troubled affection; he was very fond of her, but he had a great dislike to showing any signs of it. "If I didn't love you, Olive," said he with one glance at his recent sacrifice, "I should not be here now."

"I know; but you do love me, Willie?"

"Of course I do; you see we have been so much together."

"Better than anybody in the world?" asked Olive.

He gave a calm, well-thought-out assent, and then added, "None of my sisters are half so nice as you."

"And better than any of the girls you play with in London?"

"Oh, I never play with any girls in London! I don't like any of those I know well enough to play with them. They are stupid things, with nothing sensible to say for themselves; not like you, Olive!"

Olive smiled; she was well aware that in intellect she was stronger than Willie.

"When I am with you," said Willie, "I always find that it is quite time for me to go home when I think I've just come out; that's because we are happy, I suppose; that makes the time seem so short."

"Willie, I do love you!" cried the passionate child. "To-day when I came out, and you were not here, I didn't know what to do—I had nothing to do or to care for; I was just wishing myself dead! We must always love each other just as much as we do now."

"Yes," said Willie.

"And, Willie, when we grow up, you are not to mind my father and mother, or my uncle and aunt being cruel to us; and if they say disdainful things to you, you must bear them as a way of showing your love for me. You must keep constant to me through everything, and, Willie, I will do exactly the same; I won't be unkind to them, or disobedient to them, but I will always say, 'You need not try to get me to give up my Willie, for I never can. I have always loved him, and I always shall!'"

"Yes; that's what we will both say," exclaimed Willie, who either really felt as she did, or liked the martial sound of the words.

"And when they say to you, as I am afraid they will some day, Willie—for you see, unfortunately, my relations are of a superior rank to yours—'We cannot suffer our daughter to make this missyliance—your station, young sir, is an insuperiorable bar to any union with our house,' you are to lay your hand on your heart and flash defiance with your lustrous brown eyes and say, 'Measure not my rank by my birth, but have regard to my achievements.'"

"I say, Olive! But you are going it! Achievements! what do you mean?"

"Nay, that's what they say in all the books that I read; and besides, you must have some achievements—do something very grand and distinguished, I mean; you must be a soldier, or a sailor, or win a battle all by yourself, or write a book that the whole world will go mad about—I don't want to fix exactly what you are to do, Willie, but you must do something. Never mind about it now,"

said she kindly, seeing that her small companion was beginning to sink under the weight of responsibility she was imposing on him; "we will settle about that another day; all we need care about now is loving each other. It is so good of you to stay at home with me—I do so love you for it, Willie; I wish I could take you to some nice place to make up for your not going to see the wild beasts. Let us go to Ayton Bank Farm."

Ayton Bank Farm! The children had never yet been so far together. They rose alertly, and, with arms entwined round each other's necks, set out for their walk. When they reached the Ayton Bank Farm house-door, they remembered that no one had sent them there, and that they had no errand.

"Never mind," said Willie, "we must go in now that we have come to the very door. Let us give my grandmother's respects: she said the other day that she had a very great respect for the people who live here, so we will say that, and that we have just called to see how they were."

"Let us say nothing," said Olive, "but that you are Mrs. Morrison's grandchild, and that I am Mr. and Mrs. Brooke's, and that we are out together for a walk; and then if she says, 'Naughty children, go away home with you!' well, then we will go home, and that won't be so bad as it sounds, for we shall have to do it before long anyhow, whatever she says."

But the potent names of the grandfathers and grandmothers produced a kindly welcome. "And you're sweethearts, then, I reckon?" said the farmer's wife as a benevolent joke. "Well, come in and have some milk and cake."

Olive glanced proudly at Willie, when she heard the word sweetheart used; she was not going to disown him; he hung his head, and looked a little shamefaced. They stayed tea, and watched a girdle-cake being made for them, and played all kinds of games; and then, in what seemed to them the late and dangerous night, though it was but the dusky fading away of a sweet autumn evening, they,

much kissed and entreated to come again, stole home together, with arms confidentially locked round each other's necks and hearts more open to each other than ever they had been before.

The darkness and the proof of love Willie had that afternoon given to her, made Olive unfold to him all her hidden desires. She told him how she longed to distinguish herself; how she would like to write anonymously some book the fame of which would ring far and wide, or she alone would man a life-boat, and go through a wild and deadly storm of wind and wave to bring back some shipwrecked crew, and when the Queen wished to have her always in the palace by her side as a reward for her bravery, and afterwards, perhaps, to marry her to some great duke about the court, then Olive would shyly say, "Not so, dear lady, in my youth I already met him whom I must love all my life; none other may win my hand." Then the Queen would take her into her own bedroom and shut the door and question her who it was, and she would name Willie; and then (if Willie had, as she knew would be the case, done deeds of such note that his name was known as soon as spoken), the Queen would say, "What, our trusty William Morrison? Nay, but we are well pleased!" "and then you know, Willie," added Olive, "our fathers and mothers would be so ashamed of ever having been cross to us about loving each other, and we—no, we should be so happy, that we should care nothing about the past, and the bad things they had done to us, but freely forgive them and be just as fond of them as ever."

"And then?" asked Willie.

"Oh, then we should get married, of course," replied Olive simply.

"And perhaps be just as cross with our children when they wanted to marry against our wishes as ever our fathers and mothers had been with us," said Willie.

"I am sure we should not!" exclaimed Olive indignantly. "Mine should marry just exactly as they liked—except chimney-sweeps. I do not think I ever could give one of my beautiful girls to a sweep."

"Or to a man who goes about mending tin pans," added Willie.

"Oh, no; but don't think of such trades as those—we need not."

"Your uncle keeps a carriage, Olive, and is quite a grand gentleman. My father told me that, and that he lived in the aristocratic part of the metropolis."

"If your father said that, Willie, he speaks very nicely, quite as well as my uncle. My uncle doesn't use words a bit longer than that; but never mind about the carriage, or where we live; all I care for is this, that we love each other, and that I promise, I swear to you, never to love any one else but you, but to wait patiently in my own home till you come for me and say that you are ready to take me away to your house."

"I wonder what people do to get houses," said Willie somewhat sadly. "How did your uncle get his?"

"By working very hard, and getting to know how to cure people who are ill."

"I think I'll do that," said Willie. "How does one begin?"

"You must know Latin, for one thing—it is all done in Latin, I know; so please to attend to your lessons. I think I'll ask my uncle what you are to do for the rest, if there is more to do, and then when I get to know I can tell you."

"And then," said Willie, "after I have learnt Latin, and got the house and carriage, if I drove up for you one day, and if I was to find then that you had changed your mind and would not come?"

This was a deadly reproach to Olive, and her first impulse was anger, but she remembered that serious things were at stake, and said, "Willie, you may trust me as you trust yourself; I say I love you, and that I will wait for you and marry you. You may believe me, I cannot say it more solemnly than I do—I promise you—there!"

"That's right," said he, with no undue elation.

"But, Willie—mind, after your last speech, you quite deserve what I am going to say—if you never come? suppose that!"

"Oh, I am quite sure to come—trust me for that!"

"When I am really Willie's wife," thought Olive, "I must get him to use nicer words—'Trust me for that!' He is not a bit like a lover. Valancourt would have said something that would have made one ready to cry because it was so beautiful. Lord Cherry would have called on heaven, and earth, all the golden stars that stud the vault of heaven, to witness his truth: and that kind of talk does sound much better, and does make one believe much more; but never mind."

"Good night, Willie," said she when they came to the Grange gate. Somehow, it was a tacit agreement between them that he never went into the house.

"Good night—you are a nice little thing," said he; "I think I'll give you a kiss."

He gave her a kiss and ran away, and the children did not meet again for years.

CHAPTER V.

And I must work thro' months of toil,
And years of cultivation.—TENNYSON.

DR. BROOKE came down like a wolf on the fold and carried off Olive. Either he was dissatisfied with what he saw of his sister's management, or he was unhappy at home without the child. The day after his return he made one last appeal to his wife, and entreated her to set apart a certain number of hours daily for her writing, and to spend the remainder in doing the ordinary duties of the British housewife.

"Impossible!" she exclaimed; "it would be absolutely impossible for me to limit myself in any such way for the present, and I will tell you why—the novel I am now busy with is the very best bit of work I have ever done; I am certain it will be a success, but I must finish it first."

"But couldn't you promise me never to work at it except at stated times?"

"Of course I could. But I couldn't keep my word. And if you, Richard, had something in hand which you were quite sure would make your fortune if you could only get it done, could you be kept from going on with it? That is to say, wouldn't you be very unhappy if you were kept from it? Think yourself. My head is quite full of my last volume—all the people in it are much more alive to me than any of those about me. How could I shut them all out of my thoughts? I know I could not. I intend to see a great deal of Olive, of course, but I must sit in my own quiet room as usual. Don't begrudge me the time I spend there."

Dr. Brooke sighed. "If you could but wait until the children want less looking after—"

"And end by never doing anything!"

"You would make us happy. After all, what is the use of being distinguished? I know what you are, dear wife—is not that enough?"

"Be content to be a private insignificant person, known and loved only by God and me"; that's what you mean, I suppose," said Mrs. Brooke. "That is a bit, as I dare say you know, from one of John Wesley's letters to his wife; but would Wesley himself have been contented to be obscure? I doubt it, I am sure; men are very odd about such things. Besides, he quite justifies the desire for distinction of which he complains in her, by saying in the very next breath, 'Of what importance is your character to mankind? If you were buried now, or if you had never lived, what loss would it be?'"

"Dear Selina, you need not quote that against me. I couldn't speak so unkindly and unjustly to you: all I ask of you is—"

"To give up a thing I care so very much about. Richard, you have always been a dear kind husband to me, but you would not be so now, if you really made me do this. Remember, I once did give up writing for several years?"

Whenever Mrs. Brooke used this plea, her husband was reduced to silence. Dr. Brooke's father was originally a

very rich man. Suddenly, however, by the dishonesty of a co-trustee, he had lost the greater part of his property at a very unfortunate time, so far as Richard, his third son, was concerned. At first it seemed as if Richard's medical studies would have to be given up. He was boarding at that time with a distant relation of his father's, a widow in Gower Street. Mrs. Egerton had birth and education, but so little of this world's other wealth that she was not sorry to eke out her modest income by humoring her Austerfield cousin and taking his son into her house while he attended college. Poor people, however, are always those who have the most money at their disposal when helping a friend in need is in question; and when Richard Brooke suddenly found himself comparatively penniless, Mrs. Egerton refused to let him leave her. After a time, finding that he was much worried about money matters, she even volunteered to lend him a certain sum for college fees, but it was years before he knew how she obtained it. She had one daughter, a quick-witted, handsome girl of eighteen, much given to writing romantic verses and sentimental stories for magazines. All at once, Selina laid pen and paper by, and made a sort of friendly arrangement with some acquaintances in Russell Square to go there daily to teach their children. He faintly wondered at the time why she gave up the comfort and liberty of home-life to undertake this daily drudgery; but she looked cheerful and happy enough, and not until he had so far made his way as to be able to repay what he owed to Mrs. Egerton, did he learn that he had had the use of every penny of Selina's salary. To help him she had freely sacrificed every pleasure dear to youth, and all her literary ambition. He had married her out of gratitude; but did not marrying her imply a wish to make her happy, and had she not a claim on his indulgence beyond that which any other woman could have had?

"Dear Selina, I do not forget your kindness," he said, as many a time he had said before when his poor wife had reluctantly hinted at this plea. "Do not think I ever can forget it. You did everything for me then, you shall

spend your time as you best like now. I hope your present novel may be a very great success; I earnestly hope it. Work away at it, and give it every chance. At the same time, do spare as much time as you can to poor Olive; but I am sure you will."

"Yes, of course I will; I love you, dear, and I love Olive and the children, and I do try to make you comfortable and happy. As for all your sisters and friends, and people of that kind, I only try to do the best I can, and if they put themselves in the way of finding that insufficient, why, it's their fault and not mine."

Dr. Brooke sat a minute or two looking at the inheritor of unfulfilled renown opposite to him. There was ink on her fingers, and much on her MS. She looked very tired and worn, and was certainly working far too hard for her health.

While he was considering whether a stern refusal from her publisher might not prove a blessing in disguise, she was thinking that no young man of her acquaintance would make half so handsome a model for a hero as her own very handsome husband. His features were magnificent, strong, refined, and regular, his complexion was dark and rich, his hair black without one gray hair. He was six feet high, and singularly well-made. She could not imagine how she could have been so stupid as not to sketch from him before!

Dr. Brooke rose rather wearily. This interview had been very disappointing; but for the present, he felt that there could be no further question of gainsaying his wife's desire. He engaged a governess with a mind of the purely practical order, who set Olive at once to work, and saw that she did her lessons. Months passed, during which she was so well looked after that she had barely time for the merest run into dreamland before she was recaptured. She now and then ranted a great deal, in very bad writing on very untidy scraps of paper, or even *viva voce* when she dared, about the dull routine of her daily work, the soul-cramping effect of learning uninteresting tasks by rote, the abject monotony of pacing up and down the gravel-walks

of Regent's Park, the trammels of custom which even refused her permission to kick a stupid pebble about if she liked, when she saw one lying before her; but she was forced to submit. Miss Quilter, a long-waisted, straight-backed lady, with a dazzling gold chain, which she wore—not put round her neck, but caught over a large machine-cut cameo, and hanging down below in an ample festoon—Miss Quilter, with her long thin nose, cold watery blue eyes, and sandy curls pinned and held together on each side of her face by hair-pins—Miss Quilter had a will of iron. Nor was Olive's bondage cheered by news of Willie. She had never heard one word of him since they parted. She confided to her governess that when at Austerfield she used to play with a very dear little boy called Willie. Miss Quilter "wondered her uncle allowed it. It was not nice for girls to play with boys." Olive innocently disclosed that the little boy's uncle was a butcher, on which Miss Quilter in a frightened whisper begged her to be "quite sure never to mention that fact again to any one as long as she lived." And being pressed for her reason for this strange injunction, Olive was told that she would soon find out for herself that it would not do! She said that she hoped to see Willie some day, as he lived in Hanway Town, and Hanway Town was very near.

"My dear!" cried Miss Quilter, "I am convinced that you will never be allowed to know any one who lives in Hanway Town!" and then she set a great stone over her lips, and sealed them to silence. Olive had already talked to her aunt about Willie, and Mrs. Brooke had listened and said it was quite a romantic story, and Olive was quite a romantic little woman, and that some day perhaps she would see Willie grown rich and great, riding a beautiful horse in the park, or driving a splendid carriage; but when Olive said she wanted to know what he was doing now, Mrs. Brooke replied that she had not time to trouble herself about that—something very uninteresting, no doubt, in reality, if Olive did but know.

"But may he never come to our house?" asked the child; "or mayn't I go to see him?"

"Go to see boys of that kind! Butchers' nephews! I never heard of such a thing!"

Dr. Brooke never heard of such a thing either, when Olive's wish was repeated to him, and he even declined to waste time in feeling horror at the idea. In time she ceased to speak of it, cherishing the thought of her dear little companion all the more tenderly because she was not allowed to speak of him, and retreating, whenever she was able, to a lonely world where all was joy and sunlight, and she and Willie were the sole inhabitants. Under the Quilter dispensation all novels were locked away, and all poetry was discountenanced save such as contained a due amount of moral teaching. She parsed "Thomson's Seasons" by way of studying the classics profitably, and read "Paradise Lost" aloud on Sunday afternoons, passing over the devil's speeches as dangerous. Olive felt the want of what she considered poetry so much, that she took to writing it for herself. She was by no means an unhappy child, but she always proclaimed herself as such in verse, because she had a fixed belief that every one who wrote poetry must write as if under the ban of no common despair.

At last, a year and a half after she had left Austerfield, Olive heard that her Aunt Lettice had been asked to pay a visit in Harley Street, and the child was full of delighted expectation of either seeing or hearing of Willie. She asked a multiplicity of questions. Miss Lettice replied, that she knew nothing about him; he had gone back to his own family; he had not been at Austerfield; he was at school, she thought. She dealt with his uncle as usual, and thought it was "very dishonest of him to charge so much for his best joints! It was too bad in a place where there was no other butcher within two miles, and when he knew that the larder at the Grange was such a bad one for keeping things."

"Oh, Aunt Lettice," cried the outraged Olive, "do say no more about that! I hate it all! Besides, it has nothing to do with Willie; he did not live with that uncle, he lived with his grandmother."

"I know where he lived quite as well as you," cried Miss Lettice, "and you had no business to play so much with him, or ever to know anything about him. Every one here in London says that, and I say it too! I have been more scolded about that boy, and that time, than I can ever forget! I shall never hear the last of letting you run wild and have all your own way; but all I can say is this, that if you were to come back to Austerfield now, and this Willie happened to be there, you should not say one single word to him. And as for books, you should not touch one of mine. Your uncle and aunt should send whatever they wished you to read with you in your own box, for I never will be so scolded again."

"Not speak to Willie if I saw him?"

"No, not speak to Willie if you saw him? It is no use crying—my mind is quite made up?"

Olive's tears fell faster and faster,—

"Don't go on crying, dear, please don't. I will show you that I am not cruel. Come upstairs with me. I have something in my box which I am sure you will like; come, and you shall have it." Thus saying, she led the child tenderly upstairs—unlocked a box, and drew out two very gaudy railway novels translated from the French, with agonizing pictures on the covers. "There, child, you may read those if you like. There is nothing in them to hurt you—at least, I am almost certain there is not," she added, with a sudden distressed consciousness that their contents had entirely slipped out of her mind.

"Thank you," replied Olive, putting them down; "Uncle forbade me to read novels."

"Then, here," said poor Aunt Lettice, fumbling nervously with the catch of her purse,— "here is a sovereign for you—ask your uncle to tell you what books you may buy with it, and then you will have something to amuse you."

CHAPTER VI.

Oh days wherein all songs of birds were sweet,
The birds that mock us now with boisterous mirth;
Days when we laughed for joy of summer's heat,
Nor laughed less well when snow made white the earth!

THIS present of Miss Lettice's led to the only adventure which enlivened Olive's life for years. Proud of her errand, the child went with Miss Quilter to the bookseller's, and came hurrying back to luncheon, exclaiming, "Oh, Uncle Richard—Aunt Selina—such a very strange thing has happened! Just listen—let me tell you. We took your list to Heathfield's shop, and we were turning over the books he brought us—and he is so stupid, uncle, he hasn't half those you wrote on your list—he said they were out of date—well, we chose amongst those he had, and when we were done, and I was giving your address for the parcel to be sent, a lady I had not noticed before turned suddenly round, looked very steadily at me as if she wanted to see deep down into my eyes, took my hand in both hers, and said, 'Don't think it strange of me to shake hands with you, dear; your father and I were friends a long time ago—you are very like him;,' and so she stood looking at me, and I stood looking back at her for ever so long, or perhaps it only seemed so long to me because I felt so strange and as if I did not know what to do or say, and then she said, 'I hope he is quite well,' and Miss Quilter came and answered and told her that you were pretty well, but that you were not my real papa, and after that the lady went away. What ought I to have said?"

"Quite a romantic adventure!" cried Mrs. Brooke, adopting her usual formula. "I think I had better use it—I will make the lady very beautiful—"

"She was beautiful," interrupted Olive, "in a heavenly, star-like way."

"I will describe her beauty in more intelligible language," said Mrs. Brooke, "and, Richard, I'll make her

the wife of the gentleman she asks after, only he shall have married again because he thought this lady, the first wife, you know, was dead."

"Selina dear, I really think it would be better if you were to compose your novels in the stillness of your own chamber."

"Oh, there shall be no harm in this at all; my book shall be a kind of Enoch Arden story turned the other way. The first wife shall never reveal herself, but shall flit about her husband's path all his life. She shall take care never to let him see her, but she shall be a sort of good angel to him and his family, and do everything she can for them all. Oh! I will make it so beautiful and touching!—Why, Richard, how pale you are!"

"I am affected by your new plot," said he dryly.

Olive was haunted by the pretty lady's eyes for months; she described them as beautiful, sweet, loving eyes, which looked as if they had such a great deal to tell you. She was always longing to see her again, but she never did. Then she made her the heroine of some romantic poem, and then she forgot about her. She never forgot Willie, though all she could do to bring herself nearer to him was to gaze affectionately across the chimney-pots in the direction of Hanway Town, or pore over the map of London until she knew by heart the names of every street in the unfashionable suburb in which he dwelt. She spent a great deal of time in forming plans to get to see it, but Quilter the odious—the alert—the unpersuadable, would never listen to any entreaty to walk that way.

She began her attack on Betsey, a weak-willed nursery-maid, by saying that she would like to walk up there, "right past those trees." Then she said that she had heard of Hanway Town, and would so like to walk there, just to get to know what the place was like.

"I know very well what it is like," said Betsey; "I go there on Sundays when I am out. I have a friend there. But it is nothing to want to see, Miss Olive."

"But I do want to see it. Let us go there."

"It is too far."

"Let us walk on in that direction, and then if we find that it really is too far we can turn back."

"And then you will go home tired out, and say as how it was my persuading as took you there."

"No, indeed I wouldn't. I would say nothing."

"But if I did go all the way there with you, I am sure you wouldn't wait a minute for me till I just went into Marshall's shop to see if I could have a word with my friend?"

"How long?"

"Perhaps five minutes."

"Yes, I would; but you must first show me as much of Hanway Town as you can."

"You won't think much of it when you do see it," said the girl. "There's nothing to call aristocratic about it—just clerks and such as that live there."

At last they reached Hanway Town, and Olive felt a tightness of the heart as she looked at the long rows of small houses. Poor Willie! But perhaps he lived in one of the better ones. They were all small and dingy, and marked with the brand of humble gentility.

"Come along, Miss Olive; we have no more time to lose," cried Betsey, seeing Olive's eyes and steps so much arrested.

"Should you like to live here, Betsey?—I mean, to have one of these houses for your own?"

"Well, if any one was making me a present of it, perhaps; but if I was a-choosing for myself and had plenty of money, it would have to be something genteeler."

"We will go," said poor Olive sadly.

"Yes, but Marshall's!" exclaimed Betsey.

They went there; but Betsey's "just five minutes" became three-quarters of an hour, and still Olive was left standing outside gazing with an utter absence of interest on muslin collars and artificial flowers—a bright show enough, but there was not a flower among them of the good old Austerfield hedge-row pattern. She made various uncertain plunges into the doorway with an idea of seeking Betsey, but the shop was so large that she was afraid to go in. She walked backwards and forwards

outside in great uneasiness, and at last began to look as if she were going to cry.

"What is it?" inquired a soft voice, and looking up Olive saw the lady of her romance, the lady who had spoken to her in the bookseller's shop. She was quite as beautiful as the picture which Olive's memory had preserved of her. Her dress was a plain black one, well made, but much worn; nevertheless there was something about her which made Olive think her superior to all the ladies she had ever seen. Olive said she was waiting while Betsey was inside the shop speaking to a friend, but that she was beginning to be afraid she was never coming.

"Betsey is a very naughty girl! If your uncle and aunt knew that she left you in the street in this way, I am sure they would be very angry."

"Then they must never know, for it is my fault; I teased her till she came here with me. I wanted so to see what Hanway Town was like."

"I wonder why," said the lady in so musical a voice that Olive felt there was no power of withholding one thought of her heart from such a pretty, sweet-voiced lady, and in her own impetuous way began to tell how, long ago, when she was quite a little girl at her grandmother's, she had known such a dear boy called Willie, who came from Hanway Town, and how they had been parted and had never seen each other any more. She had, she said, always longed to get just one peep at Hanway Town that she might be able to picture to herself where Willie was living. "Do you perhaps know him?" she asked, turning eagerly to the strange lady, whose whole face lighted up in one warm, bright, and loving smile as she answered, "No, dear child, I don't know him. I am sure he is a nice little boy, though."

On this Olive put her arm in hers, and was on the very point of telling her that they were engaged to be married, and therefore certain to see each other again some day, when she was chilled by these words: "But you ought not to have come here to-day with your nurse without asking permission."

"They would very likely have said no, and I did so want to come—I have wished it for three years. It is three whole years since I saw him, and during all that time I have wished it every day of my life."

"When you are older, little Olive," replied the lady sadly, "you will find that these things that we wish for so much that we think of them every day of our lives are often just the very things which it is not good for us to have, and which we must give up."

Olive sighed and wondered what the dear lady could have had to give up that she much wished to keep. Something, she was sure. "Is there anybody whom you want to see as much as I want to see Willie?" Her companion did not answer. She was looking straight before her.

"Are you unhappy?" inquired Olive.

"Yes, dear, I am afraid I am—not always—sometimes—don't think of me."

Olive clasped her hand tightly and looked with anxious eyes in her face,—instinctively she worshipped her new friend.

Betsey now came out of the shop in a great fuss, looking red and cross, and flourishing an untidy paper parcel of small purchases. "Miss Olive, that's always the way," said she in a loud, aggrieved aside,—"*always!* If one just turns one's back on you for a single minute, you are safe to go and get into some mischief or another! Now, you know you hadn't ought to have spoken to no strangers, and you promised me you wouldn't."

"This lady is not a stranger," replied Olive; "I have met her before—besides, she is an old friend of my uncle's."

Betsey looked rather disconcerted. "Well, it wasn't me, as you know, Miss Olive, as wanted to walk here in the blazing hot sunshine all the way uphill to Hanway Town. When it comes to be found fault about, you will please to remember that coming here was not along of me or of any wish of mine, but that it was you yourself as kept on plaguing me to come, and worried and said so

much about it, that I didn't know at last whether I was standing on my head or on my heels, and just gave in to you and came."

"I never asked you to go into that shop and leave me waiting here for a whole hour," said Olive indignantly.

"I say!—an hour!" cried Betsey, turning very red; "five minutes, you mean; and if you expect me to toil all the way up here, and pass by Marshall's shop without one word to a friend I have there, all I can say is, it is more than can be looked for from any one."

Olive was going to reply, but the lady checked her and told her to say no more, it was unlady-like to dispute. "Go home and tell your aunt exactly what you have done," she added; "she is sure to be anxious."

"Her anxious, when she has her pen in her hand!—not a bit of it; and if Miss Olive goes and tells her everything, as you say, I'm sure it will be too bad! I did not want to come trailing here."

"Walk behind us," said the lady to Betsey; "I shall go home with Miss Brooke, and you must follow close behind."

There was a quiet air of authority about her which Betsey did not feel able to resist. Muttering something about "It was me as was sent out with Miss Olive, and not you," she fell behind, and the lady walked quietly homewards with Olive; and somehow, though nothing was said in the way of direct fault-finding, Olive became aware that she had behaved very ill in taking Betsey so far without asking leave;—also, that she was not living as she ought to do when she spent so much time in indulging in romantic day-dreams and railing against her lessons. This was quite a new light to the undisciplined Olive; she had always thought that by so doing she had chosen the better part, and that it was the truest sign of genius to be discontented with common every-day life.

"A true genius," said her friend, "would find beauty and nobility in any life, however humble and commonplace, if borne worthily. Besides, you ought to do your duty before you even think about being a genius." Olive hung her head.

"You love your uncle and aunt?"

"I should think so! I love Aunt Selina very much, but I'd go barefooted to the end of the world to get a pleased smile from my uncle."

"Is that true, dear? You know he gives you a governess because he wishes you to learn, and you know that you won't even take the trouble to try to understand the lessons she gives you—you only learn them by rote. I have no doubt he would give you as many smiles as you like if he thought you worked as he wished."

"He does give me smiles—he does think I work."

"Then, you deceive his trust."

"I will be different," said Olive very gently. She was silent for a while, and very thoughtful for nearly a week afterwards—then she burnt her MSS., and applied herself to work hard with Miss Quilter when she returned, and with such result that even that lady could not but see that her pupil was doing her very best to master what she taught her. She informed Dr. Brooke of this, who came to kiss Olive as she was sitting all alone in the grim, professional-looking dining-room, and told her how pleased he was.

"I know I am working better," said Olive; "I am doing it because that lady told me I ought."

"Uncle," continued Olive, as he only stroked her hair by way of answer, "what is her other name? She would only tell me that she was called Alice. You remember what she said to me, 'Tell your uncle that I hope he won't think I have taken a liberty in looking after you a little. I did not like to leave you to go home alone with that maid who had deserted you once already.'"

"Yes, I know, Olive," said Dr. Brooke rather impatiently; "you told me all about it before."

"But, uncle, was it not odd of her not to tell me her name—her other one, I mean? I wanted her to come in, but she wouldn't, and then I said, 'But who must I say it was that brought me home?' and she said, 'You need only say a lady your uncle used to know a long time ago. We don't know each other now, so it is of no use to send my name. Tell him that I have spoken to you this once,

but only because I thought it was a case of need, and that he may trust me never to speak to you again."

"'But I want a name to think of you by,' said I; and then she just stooped over me, and one of those smiles of hers came over her whole face, and she said, 'You may think of me by the name of Alice,' and so I do."

"That is right, dear; but why do you tell me all this over again?"

"Because I want to know if you don't think of her too, sometimes?"

Dr. Brooke had been looking down on the child with a face full of grave interest; at this question, which was unexpected by him, he almost started.

"Of course I do; she is, I think, a lady I knew long, long ago, when I was almost a boy."

"A boy of ten?" cried Olive, thinking this was a similar case to her own and Willie's, and that perhaps her uncle and this Alice had also loved each other as children and had been parted ever since.

"A boy of twenty and twenty-five."

"And then?" cried Olive eagerly.

"Nay, I have never seen her since, and now I am forty-two."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Olive musingly. "Then, do you think of her by the name of Alice, or by some other name?" This inquiry was a direct inspiration of the demon of curiosity.

"I have nothing more to tell you, Olive. She was a very sweet, good girl then, and I have no doubt she is just as good now, but I am not likely ever to see her again. When you grow older, dear, you will find that, as life goes on, people do slip out of your sight, and, though you may still have a strong liking for them, you don't see them."

"But why not?" cried Olive. "Perhaps she lives somewhere quite near—we might see her—why don't we?"

"Probably because she has her work to do, as I have mine—it certainly does not leave me much time to see people. I am staying too long with you now. Good-by."

Olive was far from being satisfied. She wanted to hear

much more about this lady. After this one conversation, she could never induce either her uncle or aunt to name her. Mrs. Brooke always said that she knew nothing about her, not half so much as Olive herself; and Dr. Brooke would say no more than he had said. One thing Olive could not fail to remark, and that was, that henceforth she was forbidden to go out with any one but Miss Quilter. Daily they took their duty walk together, and often did Olive's eyes scan the passers-by, to see if by some lucky chance her romantic adventure could be repeated; but the lady had said, "I shall never speak to you again," and she did more—she did not even let herself be seen by her.

CHAPTER VII.

With eyes full of sacred imaginings of things that are not.

RUSKIN.

THE reader must be so kind as to imagine that six years have passed since the date of the last chapter, during which time Olive has left childish things behind her, and grown into a remarkably beautiful woman. She was now nineteen, tall, slim, and very upright, with a peculiarly graceful carriage. Her hair, once so unmanageable, was now gathered in bright, well-ordered masses round her head. Her eyes were of the dark rich blue which is something like the color of the stems of wild hyacinths. There was a slight touch of melancholy about them, though melancholy was by no means one of Olive's characteristics; but when she cast down her long black eyelashes, there were depths in her eyes which might mean a tinge of sadness, or only delight in retrospection. Her complexion was a clear faint olive, with a touch of bright color in her cheeks; her lips were rosy and her smile bewitching; it lighted up her whole face in one glow of pleasure or sympathy. She was very shy, but at the same time impulsive, most thoughtful and most thoughtless. She was active-minded, quick-witted, helpful, and affectionate. It was now nine years

since those happy days at Austerfield, and during all that time she had never once seen Willie. Nor had she so much as heard him named, except once or twice in the casual manner with which a matter of no interest is spoken of and dismissed. Once she heard that he had been at Austerfield, but when she asked her little cousin Lucy, who was her informant, if he had grown tall, and how he looked, and what he did, the said informant had not noticed him sufficiently to be able to tell her.

To Olive herself, his image had by this time become the very vaguest and most shadowy of memories. She liked to think of him and of the days when they were together; but though in these retrospections the fields and woods and flowers stood up quite clearly before her mind's eye, Willie did not, and, strive as she might, she could not remember his face. Neither could she recall much that he had said to her. In spite, however, of all these drawbacks, the time when they were all in all to each other always stood out as a blissful period of absolutely idyllic happiness. It was a rest from her present life in a smoky, dusty, crowded town, to turn her thoughts back to that peaceful far-off time of sunshine and fresh air. But she never looked for its return, never hoped to see Willie again. These were things which by no means could be restored to her; they were part of other childish joys which there was no renewing. Willie had, no doubt, forgotten her. At their age, nine years are equal to twenty later in life, and that Austerfield time did seem so long ago. Occasionally, with a half blush, she remembered that there was in the world a young man whom she had promised to love forever, to welcome as her husband whenever he claimed her, to whom she had given kisses and every assurance of love in her power. She felt very strange when she thought of these things, and her cheeks grew hot when she reflected that he also must recall them and sometimes think of them as she did. Occasionally, too, she could not help saying to herself, "If Willie were to remember all this and still care for me and come?" She half caressed the idea, but was half afraid of it. Then she dis-

missed it by saying, "Oh, he has forgotten me ever so long ago. How could a boy go on thinking of such silly things for so many years? If ever he thinks of me at all, it is only to be ashamed of having spent so much time in playing with a little girl."

After all, work engrossed most of Olive's time and thoughts. She went daily to a college near her own home, and very hard she strove to learn all that was taught there. French, German, and Latin, Physical and Political Geography, Biology, Geology, Geometry, Algebra, Logic, and all the other arts and sciences which now it behooves a girl to master, drove out the music of the rapid becks of the north and the visions of sun-lit woods carpeted with flowers. Poetry was rare, parsing and analysis frequent. Fairy tales were left to babyhood, or turned into solar myths; legends were subjected to the light of reason, and all the gods and goddesses of mythology were put in their proper and useful places,—kept there, too, for the most part, though every now and then Olive's old spirit broke out, and the old love of romance asserted itself.

To Dr. Brooke these last six years had been years of intensely hard work, during which he had made his way professionally, but had found to his grief that he was no longer a strong man. He was in other respects quite happy. He no longer distressed himself about Mrs. Brooke's literary craze. Olive his niece was all that he desired. His boy Alick was at Harrow—his daughters Lucy and Amy were at school in Brighton. They were better brought up than they could have been at home. Mrs. Brooke was much the same as when our story opened—still absorbed in the weal or woe of fictitious personages of her own creation—still bent on some day flourishing in her husband's face a big check which would reward him for his years of waiting. These last years had brought her the joy of seeing three of her novels in print. One, that from which she had hoped so much, had only found a publisher on condition that she paid half the expenses, which half had never been regained by her. Nor had her book brought her much credit. The

next novel was printed on the half-profit-and-no-risk principle, after a great deal of signing, witnessing, and delivering. After a long lapse of time came a document purporting its intention to show forth an account of sales and returns. But all that was clear to Mrs. Brooke was, that there were no returns. It is true that a respectable number of hundreds of copies had been sold, but the profits had been so taxed and retaxed, and subdivided and subtracted from, that 10*l.* or 15*l.* would amply represent her earnings—not a sum with which to make a figure in conversation, or a check large enough to flourish in justification, of the time which she spent in writing. This novel was called “The Fateful Fortnight,” a name which might in De Quincey’s words have been characterized as a very overt act of alliteration. A third book had just come out, and had been favorably reviewed in two or three papers, on the strength of which Mrs. Brooke had set to work harder than ever, and rarely left her study.

Dr. Brooke had not many relations living, but all of them pitied him for having such a bad wife, and spoke their minds most freely; but their remarks did not trouble the gifted authoress, for she said her time was much too valuable to spend in dwelling on the silly speeches of people who had nothing else to do but talk of their neighbors. Miss Lettice still lived in Austerfield, but her aged father and mother were dead. Little as she knew of the world and its ways, she said it was a shame that Olive was not “taken out.” So said Mrs. Ullathorne also, and when Mrs. Ullathorne said anything she meant it. She was Dr. Brooke’s eldest sister, ten years older than he was—a widow and an ill-tempered one. Her husband had been a merchant in Manchester—a self-made man, who died leaving more than a quarter of a million; and now his wife lived in Kensington Square with Miss Cochrane, an oppressed worm of a companion, who turned, not on her employer, but on every one else.

Mrs. Vincent Raymond, another sister of Dr. Brooke’s, said the same thing. “It was a great shame to keep a pretty girl like Olive imprisoned in a dull, dingy, dark

Harley Street house; she ought to be introduced and taken everywhere." Mrs. Ullathorne sniffed indignantly when she heard Mrs. Raymond say that Olive ought to be taken everywhere: "everywhere was worse than nowhere! Mrs. Raymond was far too fond of going to houses whose owners did not care whether she was dead or alive." Mrs. Raymond, who was the wife of a country gentleman, and still lived on the reputation of having been a beauty, smiled at Mrs. Ullathorne's old-fashioned folly, but dared not let her see that she did so, and said she should get her dear brother Chesterfield's permission to take Olive to Court—the child would have to be presented, and the sooner it was done the better. Mrs. Ullathorne said she might write and make the offer, but Sister Raymond must know very well that, even if Chesterfield liked the idea of having Olive presented in his absence, and wrote to consent, he would quite forget to send a check for her equipment, and was Sister Raymond prepared to incur this expense herself? Mrs. Raymond looked disconcerted; she and her husband had been counting on Mrs. Ullathorne to manage that part of the business, and meekly she said so. On which that lady laughed her to scorn, and declared that when she spent money, she spent it on sensible things, and not on a few dozen yards of silk to put in a train for the benefit of court milliners. "I'll give a dinner and ask her," said she, "and that will be introduction enough."

"Oh, sister! Really?"

"I have said it, and I mean it," repeated Mrs. Ullathorne. "I'll give a dinner-party."

Then clear in Mrs. Raymond's mind's eye rose up a vision of that dinner, which she well knew would be but a reproduction of many another dinner of a dulness, and heaviness, and oppressive ponderosity which had left their mark on her for life. "And you will invite?"—she began, though she well knew that Mrs. Ullathorne would invite her stock-broker and his wife, her doctor and his, her favorite clergyman and his sister, a couple of friendly barristers, the Brookes, the Raymonds themselves and Dr. and Mrs. Ullathorne from the East-end because they were

relations; and having given poor Olive the doubtful enjoyment of their company, and the opportunity of refusing two soups, two fishes, four entrées, and a number of other dishes provided with equal amplitude, she would relax her efforts, and Olive's life would then be as lonely and dull as before, only darkened by the memory of this ghastly dinner.

"I am the one who ought to have the child," cried Mrs. Raymond. "Chesterfield ought to make me a handsome allowance; he is quite able to do it. I'd take her everywhere, and have her well married before the end of the season."

"You!" cried Mrs. Ullathorne with scorn. "And you'd settle her down with some one like your own precious husband. No! I tell you, no! Have I not informed you that I intend to introduce Olive myself, and that I'll give a dinner-party? so that, surely, may be considered as settled."

None of the Brooke family dared to resent anything that Mrs. Ullathorne said, for she was very ill-tempered and could defend herself, and besides, there was the quarter of a million, and she was known to be looking out for an heir to her wealth amongst her nephews and nieces. She openly proclaimed that she could not reconcile it to her conscience to leave her money to any one out of her own family, but that she despised and disliked every member of it.

"Well, dear," said Mrs. Raymond, "it is settled. You shall give the first party, since you wish it."

"I don't wish it," cried Mrs. Ullathorne snappishly. "I never said I did; I do it entirely from a sense of duty. Olive must be introduced to society by one of us, and my society is the only society worth knowing. Yours suits you and your husband; you know best—at least, you don't, but you won't listen to me."

Mrs. Raymond smiled good-naturedly, and said again, "And you will invite—?"

"Well, Olive of course, and Richard Brooke and that scribbling goose of a wife of his, and you and your—and your husband" (for once she considerably omitted the

descriptive epithet which she felt to be so appropriate), "and your two boys—and tell them not to come smelling of tobacco-smoke—and Mr. Reynolds," etc. ; for she did but name the names Mrs. Raymond had foreseen.

"Sister," cried that lady eagerly, "if you like to give me some money to spend on Olive, I'll buy her some pretty evening dresses: Selina has such vile taste."

"I am poor," said Mrs. Ullathorne, "very poor. Besides, who knows what calls I may have on my money, or how long I have to be here? Sister, I sometimes think my time will be very short. Miss Cochrane and I were at Finchley Cemetery the other day—she went to see some silly old woman's grave which she wanted to shed a few tears over—I forget whose, and it is no matter, but there is such a pretty bit of ground there, in one corner—I like a corner to be buried in, and so I've bought it for myself, and who knows how soon I shall be lying in it?" and Mrs. Ullathorne hung her head.

"But that bit at Merrifield you got Vincent to buy for you! Have you forgotten that you said you liked the idea of being buried near some of the family, and I suppose we shall have to be buried there when our time comes, as Vincent is Squire."

"No, I've not forgotten; I've changed my mind, that's all," said Mrs. Ullathorne grimly.

"But you bought a bit at Bonchurch; you said that was the prettiest graveyard you had ever seen."

"Well, so I did; but I think I like better to be nearer town, and I fancied this corner place. If I have wasted my money, Sister Raymond, you need not mind—I don't suppose it will make much difference to you—at least, your boys will have to change a good deal before I leave what I have to either of them." And as she said this, Mrs. Ullathorne, a grim gray woman with stony-looking features, sniffed contemptuously, and drew herself up in her high-backed chair, and pitilessly watched the distress of the fashionably dressed but somewhat faded little beauty of a sister, who had so much need of money.

"I am sure that both my boys are very anxious to

please you, they really are, if they only knew how. Sister, it really is rather difficult. I often wish you would speak plainly, and tell me what it is that you want altered in them."

"They want altering inside and out, before they will suit me," replied Mrs. Ullathorne.

"But, at any rate, you don't like any of the other nieces and nephews better?"

"No, I detest all my nieces and nephews but Olive, and I am not fond of her. But I suppose I shall have to choose one of them for my heir. I'll not make my will, though, till I see the rest of Chesterfield's children; how many has he? I declare I forget."

"Oh, you won't care for them; you know you don't like foreigners; they must have been ten years at Lausanne." All Olive's younger sisters had been brought up in a school at Lausanne.

"That's enough of itself to bring a curse on Chesterfield's children," said Mrs. Ullathorne. "That's just enough, without anything else."

"My dear!" gasped Mrs. Raymond, surprised to the top of her bent.

"Don't my-dear me," cried Mrs. Ullathorne; "I am not in my dotage yet, to want petting. Don't I know what I am talking about? I am quite aware of the value of words and of thoughts too, which is more than some people who shall be nameless are—what I mean is this, and what I will maintain is this," and here Mrs. Ullathorne unconsciously adopted the tone and manner of the clergyman under whom she had sat the last time she was at church, and began to thump the table just as he had thumped the cushion: "that if our Maker for His own wise purposes caused people suddenly to begin to speak a variety of different languages, it was because He did not wish them to understand each other; and if ever He had changed His mind about it, and had thought that they had better know what they were saying to each other, it would have been very easy for Him to make them all speak the same language again. So, Sister Raymond,

what I am maintaining, and will maintain, is this, that when you begin to teach your children, your sons and your daughters, to palaver in foreign languages just as if they were natives, it is flying in the face of their Creator. The world was made by design, and one of our Maker's principal designs was, that people should not understand each other."

Mrs. Raymond joyously exclaimed, "My dear boys were plucked because their Greek and Latin were so bad, and when they turned to modern languages they did ~~not~~ get on a bit better; both of them just the same."

"Just like them!" cried Mrs. Ullathorne, wheeling shamelessly round. "Just exactly what I should have expected of them! They make their father pay a great sum to send them to College to learn something, and when they are there, can't be persuaded to open a book."

"But—" began Mrs. Raymond.

"Sister Raymond, be quiet with your buts; let us get the dinner settled."

The sincere and hearty impulse of every one invited to the Ullathorne dinner was to send an excuse and escape it. Mr. Raymond, who well knew that his sister-in-law set her guests down to an incendiary sherry and indigenous champagne, prosaic food, and dull discourse, hinted at a previous bachelor engagement; but that attempt at evasion was instantly quenched by his wife, who thought him a lunatic to run any risk of offending her rich sister. The two young Raymonds, however, flatly declined to go; not even the prospect of a quarter of a million of money, with added savings, would tempt them, as they declared, to place themselves for so many hours under the shadow of that great upas-tree of a woman. They both declared that they were more likely to get what they wanted by staying away than by going, but, in any case, eat that dinner of dismay and dreariness they would not!

Oh, the incredible dulness of that evening! No one dared to be himself—no one, indeed, would have been allowed to be so for five minutes. Each guest disapproved of the others mentally and morally, and no topic was in-

roduced which had not been worn threadbare for years. Selina the gifted shrank into herself. Once she thought of making a study of the entertainment, and of using it in a half-written novel; but Dr. Brooke had so emphatically ordered her to keep her pen from reveling in the peculiarities of his family, that she dared not disobey him. The doctor was the only one who said a good thing; he told an excellent story, and much he suffered for it afterwards, for it was one on which his wife had set her affections for her book, and she had begged him not to use it. "You might have left me my story, Richard, you promised me that you would," said she.

"I am sorry I forgot; but mind you, Selina, a clever wife makes a very stupid husband! You want everything for your novels; you have cramped my language for five years already, with your 'Mind, I want to use that.' 'Be sure not to tell the other.' When will this tyranny be over-past?"

"The story was too good for them; I never was so bored in my life?" She was silent for a while, and then she cried, "Richard, do tell me how long Mrs. Ullathorne will live. You, as a doctor, ought to have some idea."

"Live? Why? What do you mean?"

"She would make my fortune if I could use her, she would indeed. She is so preternaturally ill-tempered and disagreeable. She would be admirable in the novel I am doing, quite admirable."

"And you want to know how long my sister will live, in order to—"

"Don't be angry, dear Richard; you know everything ought to give way to art."

Dr. Brooke screwed up his lips, and thought that in his house most things did do so.

"Is all going out like that?" asked poor Olive.

"Don't ask me," said Dr. Brooke, who was ill and tired.

"All visiting bores me."

"Don't make me go to any more parties," said Olive;

"I like home best." So she did, and gladly made herself useful to her aunt in any way she could. Many a long chapter of "The Fateful Fortnight's" swiftly coming suc-

cessor was copied by her, and many a gap in housekeeping filled by her, and no sigh was given to society, for she judged society by what she had seen at Mrs. Ullathorne's.

Two or three weeks afterwards, Olive had an opportunity of seeing another aspect of the world and its ways. The Raymonds were going to the Derby. Mr. Raymond was a member of the Four-in-hand Club, and had made up a party for the day, or rather, had let his wife do so. Mrs. Raymond at the last moment persuaded Mrs. Brooke to allow Olive to go. She was not sure that the doctor would quite approve of races for her, but Mrs. Raymond was his own sister, Epsom was in the country, and Olive would breathe pure air, see country lanes, and enjoy them; so she went. She enjoyed herself thoroughly, but when she was relating all the adventures of the day to her uncle and aunt late in the evening, no sooner had she mentioned the names of some members of the party, than Dr. Brooke started to his feet, seized the poker, and broke into a dozen splinters the large piece of coal which was innocently reposing in the centre of the fire in which he as an invalid indulged. Then he exclaimed, "Lady Norah Denistoun, did you say? Mrs. Beevor Haynes? You are quite sure of the names?"

"Quite sure, Aunt Raymond told me them."

"And they went to Epsom with you?"

"Yes, uncle, why not?"

"Why not? But it is of no consequence; only, really, I should have thought your aunt Raymond might have known better." Then he sat down again and was quiet, and did not seem to hear the rest of Olive's story of her day, and certainly did not hear Mrs. Brooke say, "Why, dear little Olive, you will turn out a perfect godsend to me, for you shall tell me all about these gay places and things, and help me to no end of good descriptions." If such was her hope, it was cut short at once when Olive went to bed. "Selina," said he, "I am master of this house, and I must assert my position; and I insist on two things; one is, that you never again allow Olive to go anywhere under my sister Raymond's chaperonage; and the other is, that you

at once renounce this habit of shutting yourself up, and go out sometimes in the evening with the child. If it is right for her to go out, it is right she should go under the care of a proper person. Mind, I insist on it."

"But, Richard, what does this mean?"

"It means that that fool or knave of a woman Esther Raymond has taken poor dear Olive out for the day in the company of two divorced women. I feel as if I could never speak to her again!" Mrs. Brooke was shocked, very much so; but soon her prevailing feeling was, that it "was a great pity Olive had gone out at all, girls were best at home."

"No, no! she is nineteen, and she ought to see something of society. It is a duty we owe to her; and it shall be performed; but she shall never again be exposed to meet such persons. Esther Raymond ought to be ashamed of herself!"

Esther Raymond was not, and said, "Vincent asked them, but in society you meet all kinds of people; I am sorry about it, of course, but it can't be helped now."

"You don't meet divorced women," persisted Dr. Brooke.

"At any rate, you meet plenty of people who ought to be divorced;" and then she added that it was "well known that Lady This and Mrs. That were twice as bad as those poor women Richard was so angry about." She did not approve of such women, of course, but what could she do? However vague her feelings on this point were, they were sharpened to keen precision the moment Mrs. Ullathorne's name was mentioned, and she was asked what she supposed Sister Ullathorne would think of it?

"Richard!" cried she with painful eagerness. "You surely will not be so unhandsome as to tell her! You would do me and mine a serious injury if you did! She has such ridiculously rigid ideas, poor woman!"

"Her ideas are mine," said Dr. Brooke coldly.

"We have no right to judge," said the lady.

"Yes, we have, when the case has been judged for us; but I won't say anything to Mary."

"Thank you. You are always kind."

"I don't know that. As long as I live, I shall resent

what you have done! To take a young, inexperienced girl—a girl situated, too, as poor dear Olive is—to such a place, with such a party!

"I was there," said Mrs. Raymond, thinking that fact disposed of all objections; but Dr. Brooke could not see it. He went home and confronted his wife in her den.

"Have you any invitations for the evening, at present?"

"Oh, yes, numbers."

"Let me see some of them."

"Well, dear, yes; but, you see, I hardly know where they are. I generally use them to write on." And she turned over her papers, and behold, fragments of her novel, "The Ominous Oath," were scrawled over the backs of invitations to dinners and evening parties.

"But you answer these, I hope?" said the doctor.

"Oh, yes, I answer them all in time; indeed, those I write on are more likely to get answers than those I put in the rack. They catch my eye more."

"Now, dear Selina, will you oblige me, and, for the sake of doing your duty to my brother's child, give up your 'Ominous Oath,' or whatever your new novel may be, so far as to accept two invitations weekly?"

"Not dinners, Richard!" said Mrs. Brooke with a thrill of dread in her accents.

"No, not unless you like—at least not only dinners. Surely you, a woman of ability, might make such things useful professionally."

How Mrs. Brooke did enjoy those words! only he might have said a woman of genius—ability was such a poor half-and-half word. She soon remembered that he was her husband, and therefore would not like to use such big words; so she smiled on his proposal, and began to say and think that perhaps she had misused her opportunities.

"Take her to concerts, theaters, and evening parties. I am sure you have any amount of invitations."

"And I may go where I like?" inquired Mrs. Brooke.

"Yes, you are not like Esther; go where you like."

CHAPTER VIII.

How singular is the thing called pleasure!—*Tempest.*

Old fashions please me best.—*Taming of the Shrew*

MRS. BROOKE did go where she liked, and very soon she was surprised to find how much she enjoyed herself. She picked and chose amongst her cards of invitation, and by preference sought the society of literary folks, painters, and musicians. "When I have got all I want from these," said she, "I will cultivate people of another kind. I am rather afraid that Richard is right, and that I have narrowed my sphere of experience too much." She had led such a secluded life, that she was intensely astonished at all she saw now that she did begin to go out; but she found constant inspiration for her pen and food for her thoughts.

"Whither away, dear lady?" said her husband as she left the domestic hearth one evening, no longer reluctant as of old.

"Oh, to such a delightful party, Richard—oh, I am so glad I got an invitation! You ought to come with us—I know you would enjoy it."

This party was at the house of Messieurs Willoughby and Langton, two of Mrs. Brooke's favorite young poets, and no one was to be there who was not either already distinguished or certain to be so. There were poets, and novelists, and artists, and musicians, and ladies who looked as if they had walked out of pictures (of a certain school, be it well understood); but no man was to be seen who had not, in the judgment of the hosts, made good his claim to be of the select few dowered with genius. Youth, however, was the predominating feature of the party—youth and intense hopefulness. All were going to do great things. Here were the men who had a year or so before published the volumes of poems which everybody spoke of

at the time as so marvellously full of promise, and on all sides were heard whispers of the beauty of the poems they were now writing. Some had seen the MS. of Clifford's last sonnet. It was absolutely perfect! A roundel by some one else was simply too lovely! "And Chesterton's play, did you hear that, when he read it to a select few? Well, there was no doubt of that making its mark." Then there were musicians who sat down and sang you ballads of their own writing set to music of their own composing, before whom the path to undying fame seemed to stretch itself forth, broad, smooth, and straight; and painters whose forthcoming pictures were to revive the glories of the Turner and Sir Joshua time. Some of the band had, it must be confessed, met with slight reverses and discouragements in their various branches of art, which were to be naturally accounted for by the jealousy and blindness of "the dull and commonplace men" who held the entrances to the Temple of Fame; but the sufferers were too young and too strong in hope to care for such reverses, or to let them cast more than a passing cloud on their lives. Their energy was undaunted, their trust in the future unwavering, and their handsome faces were full of the pride of health and delight in the work which they had set themselves to do. Edward Willoughby, the elder host, had lavished worlds of thought and fancy on the entertainment, which combined all the beauties and singularities of the most advanced Pre-Raphaelite household with a dash of fairy-land to lighten it. The floors were covered with Indian matting and Persian rugs, while a coarse sacking, gilded, stretched dado-wise all round the walls, made a mellow background for Indian and Japanese cabinets and low divans covered with gorgeous silks and embroideries. To these divans each lady was with much ceremony and respect led as she entered the rooms; and when she had taken a seat, a heavy-headed flower was placed in her hand, which she graciously held. Heavy-headed, too, were the fair ladies who thus came in with hair frizzed and rolled, and twisted and filleted with gold or silver, or parti-colored bands under which a few flowers were naively stuck, in

frank confidence in their own power of either arranging themselves, or lending adornment without any arrangement. Most of these fair guests were clad in soft white or faint blue or amber dresses freakishly made; tight where other people would have had them loose, or loose where it might have seemed more convenient to have them tight. They fell in pretty folds, and looked creamy and delicate, and not extravagant in the quantity of material used. None of these ladies sat very upright, all lounged and lolled a little; some stooped forward like the water-lilies in their own hands when their stalks began to grow limp. Some arranged themselves in wistful and sentimental-looking curves, which reminded—that is to say, would have reminded any one who did not enter into the feeling of the assembly—of the letter S. All had lovely fans, nearly all had necklaces, either of spotted and poisonous looking beads, or flat ones which seemed as if they had been lying crushed out of shape for centuries in some far-away and forgotten tomb, or else their necks were encircled by beads of some strangely tender blue-green or cloudy amber.

Langton and Willoughby had decorated the rooms and settled how everything was to be; theirs was the idea that each lady on her arrival was to be presented with a heavy-headed flower. First, they were to have water-lilies, then, when these drooped and failed, they were to have tulips, then clove carnations, and last of all roses. Langton and Willoughby kept the store of flowers and periodically went round and renewed them, and as they took the discarded flower from the ladies they threw it on the floor. This was a strong point with them; all these flowers were manifestly to live and die for their pleasure and that of their guests; when done with, they were to finish their lives at their feet.

Before any one came, the floor had been thickly strewn with rose-leaves, fair, pale pink rose-leaves; there they lay, and amongst them were sprinkled carnations and pinks which gave forth perfume when stepped on. Then upon the ebony cabinets were glasses of eschscholtzias, all put there for the sake of seeing them open their fiery golden hearts

and then droop lower and lower over the edge of the glasses which held them, and die in the glow of light and heat which had at first made their joy. The gentlemen of the party were to have no chairs, or seats on the sofas; cushions were spread on the floor on which they might sit or kneel, and they could bury their hands in the cool, soft rose-leaves lying there and win scent and refreshment from their touch. Having made up their minds to give, for once, a party entirely after their own Pre-Raphaelite hearts, Willoughby and Langton had not invited any one who was not likely to enjoy the vagary of the moment to its fullest extent. There were not more than forty guests in all, and Mrs. Brooke was the only person present who had any weight of years to bear. She had made some effort to get an invitation, and was loud in her admiration of all she saw. It was perfect!—And they must allow her to describe the party in one of her books, exactly as it had taken place. If Mr. Willoughby or Mr. Langton said she must not do so, she was afraid she could not help disobeying them. It was impossible not to attempt to describe a thing which made such a strong impression as this did on her. She had heard of “treading out fragrance, breathing perfume,” but she had never dreamed of such a realization of the poet’s words as this. No wonder Mr. Willoughby’s verses and Mr. Langton’s plays were so full of color and sweetness if this was their ordinary way of living! Did they always live in this way? It was too delightful! For her part, never again would she give any party without having every carpet in the house so thickly covered over with rose-leaves that no one could see one thread of it; and if roses were not in season, she would have something else—flowers of some sort she would have—that is, if her husband would allow her. On this Miss Poingdestre (the champion of more than one cause which requires some energy and endurance in its supporters, and who had strayed into this party rather against the will of its donors)—Miss Poingdestre, who balanced her flower in a way which taxed all the resources of its stalk, was heard to mutter her opinion that “if a husband had a voice in such a matter as that, it was

just like the rest of the way the world was managed, and the sooner—”

Mrs. Brooke never waited to hear the end of that dark saying, she was far too happy to be damped by Miss Poingdestre or twenty like her, and she passed on from the flowers and the leaves to some groups of fans and a long row of plates transfixed in endless agony and made to show their pattern to all beholders, whether they would or no, held in the perpetual grasp of wires. She marvelled at the quaintness of their effect, and was heard to declare that, come what might, she too would have fans and the same arrangement of plates. Then she caught sight of a bit of embroidery, and then she wondered where Olive was, for embroidery of this kind would lend a grace to her dull study, and Olive's nimble fingers could easily produce it; but no Olive was at hand, and Mrs. Brooke saw things on all sides which made her forget she had wanted her. She caught sight of another room where there was a dado composed of tender wavy lines, which to those present forcibly conveyed the idea of water, in which were swimming fishes of all sizes and shapes and markings, and here and there a water-plant emerged, or a water-loving insect hovered. The walls of this room were the bluest of things green and the greenest of things blue. There were no plates, no pictures, no fans, but in a corner, so as to avoid all the dark errors of a love of symmetry, or proportion, or composition, flew a host of white butterflies. They crossed the corner diagonally, and were beautifully painted. “How lovely!” cried all. “How decorative!” “So rightly put in!” “There's a touch of genius in the boldness of that design.”

“If you like rooms done up in this way,” said Mr. Willoughby, “why not get yours done? Those Harley-street houses turn out very well. You would have to change your furniture, but you could soon do that. I can tell you of a fellow in the Seven Dials who can let you have a set of first-rate chairs. They are Chippendale, and the finest I have seen for years, beautiful without bombast—absolutely beautiful.”

"Can I remember that?" thought poor bewildered Mrs. Brooke. "I ought to have Olive near me to help me to remember these things. Beautiful without bombast would make my fortune, but I shall forget it, I know I shall. Where is Olive?"

She peeped through a chink between a quaint Chipperdale stand for a flower-pot, which had one tall arum on it, and a screen rescued from some lumber-room to make the delight of her present hosts, and saw Olive talking to a good-looking young man. She looked interested, and Mrs. Brooke benevolently resolved to leave her alone.

"I am inclined to agree with you," Olive's new friend was saying. "I think you are quite right in feeling that if a picture is intended to represent nature, it should be like nature. I know Morrison holds that opinion, and I like his pictures better than any one else's."

"Morrison! Willie Morrison!" cried Olive eagerly. And then she blushed deeply and said, "Oh, I beg your pardon. I was thinking of a little boy I knew long ago."

Mr. Denbigh—that was his name—smiled and said, "I believe my Mr. Morrison's name is William—indeed, I am sure it is."

Olive breathed quickly.

"You want to know if he is the Mr. Morrison you used to know?"

"Yes," said Olive; "I want to know—I am most anxious to know—I will tell you why, afterwards."

"I am afraid I can't give you much information. I was introduced to my Mr. Morrison two or three winters ago in Rome—he was painting there. I was always expecting him to catch Roman fever and die; for he used to drive out across the Campagna every fine evening to watch the sun set. That is a deadly thing to do in winter, or indeed at any time. I warned him, and he wouldn't be warned; but after all, I was the one who caught the fever—not he, and he nursed me through it."

"You said drive out—the Willie Morrison I knew was very poor."

"Oh, this one was not poor. I do not know what he

had, of course, but he lived in the same way that every one else did. He was an artist, but he never sold pictures when he was there, so he must have had money. He was a good deal in society, though he did not care for it."

"It can't be the same," said Olive sadly, for her poor Willie was not likely to be spoken of thus. "Tell me what he was like."

"He was good-looking, tall, had dark hair and bright hazel eyes, and was about twenty, I think, and that is some years ago."

"But it must be the one I knew—I really think it is."

Olive looked so interested that he said, "I will tell you more about him. Let me see. I never knew any one so fond of poetry—he wrote beautiful poems himself."

Olive shook her head. "No, it is not the same. The one I knew was poor and not in society, and hated poetry—positively hated it."

"I am afraid I can tell you no more," said Mr. Denbigh, "except that he was a capital fellow and very kind to me. My Morrison, for so I call him to distinguish him from yours, used to be thought an excellent artist in Rome; his work is not much known here, but he has lately been made an Associate of the Old Water Color Society, so if you go to their gallery you may see it."

"Where does he live?—in Hanway Town?"

"Hanway Town? oh dear no! Not that I know where he does live, though, for he is always sitting on open moors and mountain tops."

"And what are his relations like?" she asked very humbly, dreading what the answer might be.

"I don't think he has any. I know he has neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister. His name is William Keithley Morrison—I had forgotten that."

"That settles the question—I knew he was not the same. The William Morrison I knew had no other name. He was poor and had a poor father and mother. I knew him when I was a very little girl long ago in a country village where my grandmother let me play with him. I

suppose I ought not to have played with him, but it was very nice."

He smiled, and she added, "I ought to tell you that I have never seen him since I was a little girl of nine."

"It is a pity that I cannot help you to find him again. My friend has some very marked peculiarities. He is a fellow who likes his work better than most people like their play, and grumbles when he has to go into society. He ought to have been here to-night—perhaps he is coming. Don't look startled."

"Don't let him know how I have questioned you, if he does come. I have bored you with it for nothing, for the moment you said he was fond of poetry, I might have known he was not my old friend."

For weeks after this evening at Mr. Willoughby's, Mrs. Brooke did nothing but bring sap-green things and sage-green things, and tiny pieces of rigid furniture into Dr. Brooke's house. Wall-papers of this soothing mildness of color, with botanical specimens printed on them to enliven them a little, were stretched on walls which had hitherto known only French papers of satin sheen and golden luster. All the curtains and cornices, together with the festoons and cords and tassels thereto appertaining, were torn down and replaced by plain poles from which depended severe lines of crushed velvet, sap-green serge, or even rural Bolton sheeting. Then came a change as complete as that which annually befalls the pictures in the Salon. All the drawing-room furniture was sent up to the garrets and the nurseries, and the garrets and nurseries were rifled for chairs, tables, and corner cupboards, which were now discovered to be perfect in taste, though years before they had been consigned to these distant regions with contemptuous wonder at the ugliness of the things the Brookes contrived to leave behind them when they died. Unmanageable sideboards and sofas now once more stretched their huge length along the rooms below; backless seats offered their hospitality to admiring guests. Pictures which had been wrought by the aged Brooke grandmother in her childhood now came to great honor;

a line engraving copied touch for touch in black thread on white linen once more saw the light, and was called "highly interesting;" while an angel rising heavenwards with its face and hands painted in water-colors, and the rest of it embroidered in white silk, was brought downstairs again, and once more soared where it could be seen. Hand-screens, fire-screens, and "bell-pulls" worked a hundred years before, and hid out of sight for fifty, enjoyed a new life, and on all sides was heard the cry of "New lamps for old ones." Meanwhile Mrs. Brooke was as busy as a swallow, which eats, drinks, bathes and feeds her young, flying. She superintended all these changes herself, writing a passionate page, and then hurrying away with all speed to see that no mistake was made in her furnishing, then back to her pen, only to be summoned from it to watch her floors being stained, or to meet some gentleman in solemn consultation in order to find ways and means to cope with the difficulties of corniced ceilings and white marble mantel-pieces. The work progressed; purchases were many, and soon every corner of the rooms became almost uninhabitable by reason of small over-turnable tables and tall stands with what Mrs. Brooke believed to be priceless china on them. Dr. Brooke had at first been much pleased to see his wife "come to her senses and go out;" but every time she went out she came home with some new idea, and all her ideas were so large, and took shape with such promptitude and decision, that he was appalled. "My dear," he sometimes said ruefully, "remember that I am not a rich man. Who is to pay the bill?"

"I'll pay the bill, Richard. I have just discovered that we can sell the dining-room mantel-piece—great big, ugly thing that it is—to a man who is collecting for France. We can get 200*l.* for it. The mantel-piece will pay the bills, dear."

"The mantel-piece is expected to pay its own weight of bills, I see," observed Dr. Brooke dryly, and turned on his heel; but he came back to say, "Where are my pictures?"

"Oh, don't regret your pictures; I have been forced to

send them into the back bedroom. They are not decorative—they quite throw the tone of the room out of harmony."

"I should like to know what you mean to hang up that will look better than my Turners and Prouts."

"Only wait, dear; you will see; I am sure you will approve. I mean to treat myself to a few Persian and Rhodian plates, and hang them on the walls; we can afford them, you know, if we sell the mantel-piece, and they will look jolly."

"'Jolly!' dear!"

"Yes, that's the right word to use. Professor Saville used it to me only last night."

"About plates, Selina?"

"No, about pictures. He said the Botticellis at Burlington House last winter were extremely jolly; but it is right to use it in speaking of china as well."

"Well, you'll tire of all this, I hope," said Dr. Brooke, and departed. His house was not the only thing which was changed. Mrs. Brooke dressed herself artistically. Sometimes she was a mature Mary Queen of Scots, sometimes a Catherine de Medicis with a forbidding and murderous hood. Then Olive was made to wear skimp, limp Indian muslins, and Mrs. Brooke sent down to Aunt Lettice for all the old buckles and combs and waistbands and lace fichus that could be found lingering in the lumber-room at Austerfield, and attired in these she went out. Mr. Ambergreen painted her in the contorted attitude of a mediæval saint, and the picture was sent to the Dudley Gallery and was hung beside other damsels of the same kind and much applauded, and Mr. Ambergreen helped Mrs. Brooke to find her way into the inner recesses of shops in Hanway Street where she bought all kinds of antique ornaments of small intrinsic value but great strangeness, and these were hung about Olive with marked success, and wherever they went these were discussed and admired. Olive, too, was much admired, but not so much as these uncouth decorations, and both she and Mrs. Brooke were perfectly happy. Dr. Brooke was not

so happy. He began to think that the last state of Selina his wife was worse than the first. He did not like the rigid outlines of his new home. He did not like the ladies of his household to make such frights of themselves. He had an affection for his old engravings and dignified water-colors; he did not think that china plates were ever intended to be hung up as pictures, or feel that they supplied enough food for his eye's worship. He hated cliquism and collectors' talk, which always ends by dwelling on prices paid, and bores you to death by its sameness. He remonstrated with his wife. Nothing checked Mrs. Brooke. She even went down on her knees to show the maids how to polish a floor.

"Surely you might employ your time better, Selina," said he one day when he found her doing this.

"I know you think I ought to be writing," said the gifted lady (Dr. Brooke made a wry face); "but manual labor promotes the flow of ideas. Ruskin and I both think that, and Charlotte Brontë too: she said that she never wrote so well as she did after she had been black-leading a grate."

"There is a lady in the drawing-room who wishes to see you, ma'am," said the servant, coming in at this moment.

"Who is it?" asked Mrs. Brooke. John did not know. The lady had asked if Mrs. Brooke was at home, had come in, and had refused to give her name. She was young and pleasant-looking, and seemed to know the family. "You go, Olive," said Mrs. Brooke. "I want to see this bit of work done, for after to-day I can spend no more time on this room—I ought to be writing."

"But look at my dress," said Olive. "It is not fit to be seen. It is dreadfully tumbled with kneeling on the floor." She was rubbing the floor with a silk handkerchief. Mrs. Brooke thought that better economy than "employing so many men to do things." Her dress was made of the butcher-blue linen which Helbronner sells. It fitted her as Pre-Raphaelite dresses do. It was long and plain, and confined only by a band fastened by one of

Aunt Lettice's old buckles. Artists admired it, and liked her hair as it was in a bushy fuzz, although the taste and fashion of the day were dead against them; but that makes it sweet to wear such raiment.

"Oh, go as you are—you look very nice, and people have no right to come so early!" said Mrs. Brooke, who steadily refused to disturb herself. Olive ran down. A very fair, smooth-complexioned, light-haired, blue-eyed, calm-looking, and still handsome woman of seven-or eight-and-thirty rose to meet her. The stranger smiled encouragingly, stepped forward gracefully, took Olive in her arms, pressed her soft cheek against hers by way of bestowing a kiss, and said, "Dear child, you do not know me—I am your mother."

CHAPTER IX.

Are these the breed of wits so wondered at!

Love's Labor Lost.

OLIVE at once ran to tell Mrs. Brooke, and Mrs. Brooke at once hurried to the doctor. "Richard," said she in an urgent voice, "Chesterfield's wife is here! here in the drawing-room with Olive! I am just going to her, but please promise me not to invite her to stay with us."

Dr. Brooke looked as if he heard a singularly unwelcome bit of news. He seemed bewildered, and as if his thoughts were in the past rather than the present. "I invite her, Selina!" said he at length.

"Well, don't, dear, that's all! I could not have her here. I never liked her—I do not want her in the house. I should not get a stroke of work done if she were here."

A loud peal of the bell warned Dr. Brooke that he had no time for home life; but what was his surprise at luncheon-time to find that Selina herself had invited Lady Brooke to stay with her until she had either found rooms or a house! Lady Brooke, in the quietest and most natural manner possible, had conveyed to Mrs. Brooke that

she thought it a privilege even to speak to a woman who had written "The Fateful Fortnight," not to mention "Evelyn's Entanglement" and "The Ominous Oath." Lady Brooke could allude to scenes and quote passages, and relate how the Governor-General had made her pretty speeches about being connected by marriage with such a popular author, and then she could dwell on the pleasure it had given her to see the reading folks in India revelling in these books and to find them even in Ceylon when she went there for a change. Lady Brooke asked to see the study where her dear Selina wrote, consoled with her on the interruptions of her daily life, and said what a privilege she should esteem it if she could but be near her to ward off some of these attacks on her peace, and sometimes be rewarded by hearing a freshly-written chapter read for the first time.

"Oh, thank you," cried Mrs. Brooke; "not many women are like you. As a rule, they take upon themselves to despise me! In fact, the very worst of novel-writing is, that every silly woman of your acquaintance, who could not produce a book even to save her life, considers that she is your superior because she does not try to do it."

Mrs. Brooke was a good deal won over by her sister's sympathy, and as she was thoroughly warm-hearted and liberal, and, besides that, often in want of a listener, she ended by saying, "But do come here. Do stay here until you have some settled place of residence."

Lady Brooke explained that she had left her husband for a while because of her health. She had paid a flying visit to Lausanne and her girls, had slept one night in Paris, and had not written because she wanted to take Olive by surprise, and now she was going to stay in London for a while—perhaps even for a year. "The worst is, dear, that I am not well provided with this world's wealth," said she. "Chesterfield gave me some hundreds, and would have given me any sum I liked, but I had not the heart to let him waste his money on me."

"You won't take Olive from us?"

"I am afraid I must. I should like to go into society

a little with her, and then, I trust, she will see some one whom she can love and marry."

Mrs. Brooke sighed and said, "I have been taking her into society. I have chosen what I think you will agree with me in preferring to any other—that of writers and painters."

Did Lady Brooke make a wry face? If she did, Mrs. Brooke did not see it, and Lady Brooke made haste to say, "Oh, charming! I am so glad you have taken her among people worth knowing, the only people, in fact, who are worth knowing. We in India have little chance of seeing any interesting folks of this kind. We have newspaper correspondents now and then, or a man comes to see the sun do something or other; but except these we have nothing beyond our usual set. It is a great loss!"

"But," said Mrs. Brooke innocently, "if you care about society of this kind, why not go with us to the Millennium Club? You will see every one there. There is a great mixture, of course, and the entertainment is rather rough, but every one there is somebody." Then Mrs. Brooke explained that the Millennium was a club of very advanced thinkers indeed, who five or six times a year invited ladies to their meetings and gave them oysters and sauterne, or the more potent beverage of brandy and soda-water. Lady Brooke's eyebrows arched themselves a little, but she seemed very enthusiastic about going. "And now," said Mrs. Brooke, "as John has taken a cab to bring your maid and your luggage, come into my study. We shall be alone all the afternoon, so I can make a good beginning and read you the novel I am now busy with. No one is likely to interrupt us; besides, I will take measures to prevent it."

"That will indeed be delightful!" cried Lady Brooke, who began to repent having accepted her sister-in-law's hospitality. "Quite too delightful!" Lady Brooke may have slept a little; she could not have slept much, for Mrs. Brooke, when reading, had a trick of darting a glance in search of sympathy straight into the eyes of her listener when any especially admirable passage occurred, and in

her estimation this was frequently the case. They sat till dinner, and then, alas! when, worn out and feeble, listener and reader sat down for physical refreshment, the fish was not boiled, because the man had just brought it ten minutes before the dinner-hour. Mrs. Brooke had for a fortnight been going to scold him for his unpunctuality, and had always forgotten. The meat, too, was half-roasted, because cook had only got a fire at all by brushing up the last shovelful of dust in the coal-cellar and using that in combination with some dozens of firewood which had been got in in a large quantity as a measure of economy. Mrs. Brooke had omitted to order coals. Then the pudding had not set because there was no heat in the oven, and finally a cheese *soufflé* came up looking in nowise different from a badly made baked-batter-pudding, "and all because the pore cook was so flustered like," said John. Dr. Brooke pushed his plate away and said it was not wanted. He was cross with his wife, but presently he had to go away to a meeting.

"Such things will happen," said Mrs. Brooke suavely. She considered it very unworthy of people capable of immortality (by means of literature) to care much for creature comforts. "I am not too tired to go on with our reading, Honora," said she, "if you are not too tired to listen?"

"I could listen forever," said Honora, and they went to the study. Olive went off to the piano in the drawing-room: she knew her aunt's works by heart.

It was late before the reading was over. "Later than it ought to have been," said Mrs. Brooke, "for we have to breakfast at eight. I am sorry for you, but you see you have come to stay with working folks."

Next morning, Lady Brooke—who perhaps found eight o'clock rather early—sent a message to her host to say that, as she had a headache, she would stay where she was—in bed, and would only take a cup of tea.

She had her wish, and presently Mrs. Brooke came with her MS. "I don't mind giving up the morning to read to you, dear, if you think it will amuse you."

"How truly kind!" said Lady Brooke. "You won't mind my lying with my eyes shut? The light rather hurts them, you know."

She did keep them rather tightly shut; an unfeeling enemy might have said that she was asleep. So it went on all day, more or less. Joys were rare, unless listening to MS. novels was one.

"What about the Millennium?" said Mrs. Brooke.

"Honora, shall you be well enough to go?"

"Oh yes, thank you," said Lady Brooke, for she knew that, if she did not, Mrs. Brooke would stay at home and read to her.

"We won't be particular about dinner, as Richard is going out," continued Mrs. Brooke.

Lady Brooke, judging from the evening before, thought that she was not very particular when he was in. She sighed gently, for it was pleasanter when people were particular.

"How shall I dress, dear Selina? I did get a couple of dresses made while I was staying in Paris; but they are very plain ones."

Mrs. Brooke did just notice that there was a slight discrepancy between the fact that Lady Brooke had had time to get two dresses made in Paris, and the other fact, previously communicated, that she had only slept there one night to rest herself; but Mrs. Brooke was a very good, unsuspicious woman, and thought there was a mistake somewhere; so she only said, "You can wear anything at the Millennium. When Sister Ullathorne uses that carriage of hers, which is seldom, she always says she puts on a half-penny head and a farthing tail, for no one sees her skirts. That's the right way to do at the Millennium, for no one likes to be too well dressed there. You see, the people drop bits of biscuit and sandwiches about, and throw glasses of wine over you; it is such a crowd, and your dress gets so marked, it is spoilt. Put on an old black dress. That's what I do,"

That is what Mrs. Brooke did, and her sister-in-law did not like the effect; and when Olive came down in the last

lunacy in artistic attire, Lady Brooke shrank back in horror. It was a horror which was speechless, or she would have said, "You are not going out such a fright as that, child?"

"Yes, isn't it lovely!" cried Mrs. Brooke, wholly misunderstanding the effect produced. "I never saw a sweeter bit of color than she is, and so artistic! I like those puffy sleeves immensely."

"Only, they are not puffy enough," said Olive. "What is the use of having puffy sleeves, if they are not puffier than every one else's?"

"But," cried Lady Brooke, "do people wear dresses of that kind? I saw nothing like them in Paris."

"The really artistic people wear them. Olive has a dress you will like far better than this. It cost nothing at all but the price of a little silk for the pipings. It is made out of two old scarves of her grandmother's, and whenever she puts it on you have no idea how it is admired. There never was a time when it was so easy to dress. You really can wear anything."

"But," said Lady Brooke aghast, "are you really going out in that—that dress? Won't people stare?"

"Oh dear, yes! but when one knows how beautiful the dress is—"

"You see, I am fresh from an outlandish country," said Lady Brooke, who felt ready to sink into the earth with dismay.

At first sight the Millennium did not seem a place likely to be especially haunted by the Muses. You entered a low doorway in a big and fashionable street, and made your way up a narrow paved court. Then you climbed a steep flight of stairs, and when you were half-way up you heard the croaking roar of the human voice in brisk general conversation. The club-room was quite full. Well-dressed and ill-dressed people crowded beneath the large center gaselier—most of them standing. Pretty women and clever men were there in plenty; Liberal M.P.s; exiled Communists to whom the right hand of fellowship had been freely extended; leader-writers; essayists; poets, young and old;

men who wrote in "Mind," and women who read "The World," together with ladies who wanted to have a share in managing it; reviewer and reviewed,—all rubbing shoulders, and talking as if talk were the first object of their existence.

"Oh, good heavens!" ejaculated Lady Brooke, as, half-deafened with the din and fainting with the heat, she sank into a chair which had lost a foot.

"Isn't it pleasant?" said Mrs. Brooke joyously. "I'll tell you who all the people are. It is a very good gathering to-night, I can see."

"Most striking faces!" said poor Lady Brooke.

"Yes; you do not often get so many remarkable people together in the same room."

Lady Brooke groaned inwardly, for the noise utterly bewildered her; but she composed her features to the semblance of a decent smile.

"Honora," said Mrs. Brooke presently, "do you know that there are seven men in this room who are under sentence of death—ex-Communists, you know!"

Lady Brooke's most fervent wish was that some one would quickly come and see that the sentence was carried out. "Indeed dear!" she said drearily. It was getting too much for her. She took a practical view of life. She had a daughter to marry, and did not want to select an ex-Communist, or any of the people whom she saw there, unless they were better off than they appeared to be.

"Who is that talking to Olive?" she asked.

"Sir John Ellerton," said Mrs. Brooke, and looked another way as if nothing more could be said.

Lady Brooke did not think so.

"He seems to enjoy his conversation with her," she continued.

"He always does. There is nothing in him, though; he is very stupid."

"But he is one of the Yorkshire Ellertons?"

"Yes."

"But they are all very rich?"

"Yes. I fancy this young fellow has a very large for-

tune. I am very glad of it, for, poor fellow, he has nothing else to boast of."

Lady Brooke was one of those persons who, when they hear of anything good which seems within their reach, immediately try to see if a little of it cannot be induced to flow into a channel which will benefit themselves. She thought Selina an apathetic idiot, but she did not say so. Her eyes turned to Olive and her companion. They were three chairs off.

"Selina we ought to know something of a young man who talks so much to Olive. Is he—"

"Oh he is a very good sort of fellow, but so dull—at least, so unintellectual. He wanted me to ask him to something or other at our house, but I had not the courage. We should have been bored to death. Rich people are always stupid, I think."

Lady Brooke ran her eye meditatively over her sister-in-law's face. Here was a woman with a full complement of senses acting like an idiot. The sight was so curious to her that she lingered over it a moment before saying,

"Introduce me to him, dear. Let me see what he is like for myself."

Sir John Ellerton, a clear, bright-eyed, handsome Saxon, looked kindly in the face of the lady who was, as Olive's mother, so interesting to him. He found a thousand things to say to her which Mrs. Brooke would have cut short in a moment as trivial and dull. Lady Brooke thought his conversation as good as any one else's, and was very glad he did not talk of books and book-makers. He had plenty to say, though he did not discourse on high matters; and he was evidently a good, warm-hearted fellow, and, what was still more important to her, he had taken a great fancy to Olive. What was to be done? If only Lady Brooke had a house of her own, or even rooms to which she could invite him, she would soon see that this affair came to a proper and profitable conclusion; even now she heard him fishing for an invitation from the obtuse or obdurate Selina, with a persistence which that lady totally disregarded; and if she herself gave one,

or found an excuse for bringing him to call, there would be a troop of high-art decorators in the only room at liberty for his reception, or Selina would tell her servant, "Not at home to any one to-day, John; I can't be disturbed on any account whatever."

"Did you not see that that young man was doing his best to get your leave to call?" said she.

"Yes, I fancied he wanted an invitation, but what is the use of letting him come to our house?—we are not in his way."

"But suppose he has a fancy for Olive?"

"What a pity it would be! I am sure she would never care for him."

Lady Brooke shrugged her shoulders. She wished she had money enough to hire a nice house at once. She had been two days with her sister-in-law, and did not think she could bear to stay many more.

CHAPTER X.

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me no doubt, were a house in the city square.

ROBERT BROWNING.

Many who keep their chambers are not sick.

Timon of Athens.

"MAY I come in?" said Lady Brooke next day as she tapped at the door of the sacred study. "I have not come to disturb you, dear Selina; I would not run the risk of spoiling a chapter for the world. I have only come to say that I am going to pay my respects to Mrs. Ullathorne, and I want to beg you to be very careful if you see her, for—don't be shocked!—I am not going to tell her that I have been in London since Tuesday evening. I shall let her think I came yesterday. I won't exactly say I did, you know: but I dare not confess to Tuesday, when I have kept away from her until to-day, and it is Friday. She would never forgive me."

Mrs. Brooke looked as if she did not understand. She was not a manœuvring woman, and she was asleep in a thrilling scene. "I only came to ask you not to betray me if anything is said. I dare not offend Mrs. Ullathorne, Chesterfield would never forgive me if I did."

"I never see her," said Mrs. Brooke. "At least, very seldom. She won't ask me when you came."

"Well, leave it vague if she does. I must go. I wish I could stay with you. I should like nothing better than to sit down, pen in hand, and let you dictate to me some of the beautiful thoughts I can see your mind is full of. Good-by. I won't waste more of your time. I wish Mrs. Ullathorne would take it into her head to go into the country, and let me have that nice house of hers rent free."

"I wish she would," thought Dr. Brooke, who came in at this moment and heard the aspiration. He did not like Lady Brooke. He had been a changed man since she came into the house—watchful, constrained, and silent.

"What do you want, dear?" said Mrs. Brooke, when alone with her husband; "I am in the middle of something so important, and do so want to get on. Honora thinks she does not disturb me, but she does."

"You won't have Honora long. You heard her say that she wished to have Mrs. Ullathorne's house, and depend upon it, if that is the case, she will soon have it. Honora has an odd knack of getting her own way. If you were a wise woman, Selina, you would not go on spinning characters out of your own brain when you have that woman in the house to study from. She is wily, insinuating, unfathomable—I wish she was out of my house!"

"Oh dear Richard, how wrong you are! 'wily, insinuating, unfathomable.' She is as simple-minded and straightforward a woman as I have ever seen, quite natural and open—she has a kind manner, that's all. I am a novel-writer, and have to study character, so I ought to know. I can't think what makes you take against her

so; besides, when she does go, she will take Olive with her; don't forget that."

Dr. Brooke sighed. "This has come so suddenly. I knew we should have to give Olive up some day, but one does not like to give her up to that woman; it is a sin to let her have the keeping of the child—a sin and a shame. I have a great mind to resist it."

"Impossible! And, Richard, you are unjust to her; she is very kind, and—"

Dr. Brooke would not listen to any praise of Honora; he ran away without explaining the business that had brought him, and Mrs. Brooke sighed and said to herself, "If only husband, and house, and children, and friends would abate their tormenting power for one short half-year, I could write a book which would prove that I had a perfect right to ask to have my time to myself; but it is of no use to wish for such a thing."

Lady Brooke went straight to Mrs. Ullathorne's, and as she drove up the Bayswater Road her eyes rested longingly on the handsome houses which rear their tall height by its side, and her mind was filled with visions of all that she could do if one of these were but placed at her disposal for a time with a suitable income. "It would be such a comfort," thought she, "if I could marry off Olive while I am here. It would put an end to all Chesterfield's worrying. I must make a great effort to do so. I do not see why there should be any difficulty about it. She is very pretty, and people seem to find her charming. I wonder she has not got engaged long since. It would have been curious enough to see the husband Selina would have chosen for her. I should most likely have had to dismiss him." While occupied with these thoughts, she reached Kensington Square. A sulky-looking parlormaid opened the door and took her upstairs. Mrs. Ullathorne was sitting on one side of the fire and Miss Cochrane on the other. They were talking in a very excited manner about something or other, and one—the one who dared to do it—turned an irate eye on Lady Brooke for thus disturbing them. "My dear Sister Mary," cried

Lady Brooke. "I have not lost a moment in coming to you. Chesterfield said, 'See all my family, Honora, but see my sister Mary first.' Poor Chesterfield! He does not forget."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mrs. Ullathorne. "So you are here, Lady Brooke! Well, why have you left your husband?"

"My health gave way. Sooner or later, every one feels that Indian climate. But I shall not stay long in England; I shall soon rejoin my husband."

Two or three inquiries followed, but Mrs. Ullathorne evidently took little or no interest in Chesterfield or in the state of his wife's health. "You look radiant," said she, resolved to treat the matter exhaustively; "you say you are ill, but here in England, when people say they are ill, they don't look like that. Now, I am ill, really ill, and am likely to be worse—much worse. Troubles and vexations, vexations and troubles, and people taking a part against me who ought to be the very first to stand between me and all annoyance"—here she darted a crushing glance at Miss Cochrane. "It's the way of the world, I suppose; I was always told that if I wanted to be ill-treated, the best way to secure what I wanted was to be very kind to some one, for the people you were the kindest to were always the first to turn against you! I never believed it before, but now I see it is true."

"It is not true!" cried Miss Cochrane. "You are unjust to me."

"I am not unjust. I am ill-used and worried and driven out of my very senses by servants and all the vexation that having them implies, and you, Miss Cochrane, you always take a part against me—you are always on the servants' side, that you are!"

Miss Cochrane began to weep silently; Mrs. Ullathorne looked angrily at her and continued: "Well, I shan't be here long, that's a comfort—the only comfort that I can see."

"My dear, dear Mary," cried Lady Brooke, "what is the matter? Tell me. I am sure poor Miss Cochrane is most anxious to please you."

"I bought a vault for myself at Finchley the other day," said this Juggernaut of a woman, still driving on, "and it won't be long before I am in it, and then many who shall be nameless will wish that they had behaved differently while there was time to do so; that they will, to a certainty."

"Oh, do stop," implored Miss Cochrane, but Mrs. Ullathorne would not. "Stop, please stop," again wailed the companion; but when, on the contrary, she saw Mrs. Ullathorne's lips begin to move despitefully, she ran in her despair towards the door.

"Now, if you meet that woman, be so kind as not to go on taking a part against me," cried Mrs. Ullathorne, pursuing her with one last shot. Mournful sobs followed this last act of aggression. Mrs. Ullathorne sniffed angrily, and turned to Lady Brooke and said, "I don't like relations, but perhaps even relations are better than companions! I'll never forgive Bessie Cochrane! I would tell her to pack her boxes and go, only I am so afraid of being left quite alone, and she knows that, and presumes—actually presumes—to take the servants' side. Servants are never in the right. It is nonsense to say they are; they are not educated."

"Of course it is nonsense," said Lady Brooke, who did so wonder what all this meant.

"I never had a better servant than that woman who opened the door to you," said Mrs. Ullathorne. "Never! I hate her, but she is a good servant. She is as punctual as clockwork—thoroughly clean—quick, clever, and kind—and if she goes, I should not know what to do. Besides, that is not the worst; she and the cook are sisters—they came together, and they'll leave together; and if they do, I'll give up housekeeping and have no more servants, for before these came I never had a moment's peace—no, never! Dirty, wrangling, thieving women came into the house and made me uncomfortable for a week or two, and then went away, and worse came in their place! No, if they go, I'll sell my house and furniture and live in a hotel—I will indeed."

"But why do you think they are going?"

"I am sure they will go. I offended them this morning before luncheon, and they are only waiting to see me alone to give me notice. That parlor-maid will give me notice this afternoon, and the cook to-morrow morning, and Bessie Cochrane is on their side!"

"Oh, but if you want to keep them, we must stop their going," said Lady Brooke. "Tell me more about it, and I will see what can be done. I am very clever at contriving."

"I always thought you must be, or you would never have caught Chesterfield," was on the tip of Mrs. Ullathorne's tongue, but self-interest restrained her: nothing else would have done so. "I'll tell you what happened. It was such a little silly, simple thing. I was getting something out of a closet near the head of the back stairs this morning, when a most delicious smell of cooking came upstairs. It was so good that I could not help saying to that sulky woman who let you in—she was helping me to look for something—'Oh what a good smell! What nice things they are cooking in the kitchen! I do hope that they mean to let me have a taste of them!' And she sniffed and tossed her head indignantly, and I saw in a moment I had said something wrong, and she cried out that she was 'quite sure no cooking was done that I was not aware of, and that it was very unpleasant to be suspected, and I was always suspecting one or other of them; however, she should make it a point of going downstairs at once and asking her sister what she had been cooking, and if it was anything I had not ordered.' I begged her not to do this, but she said, 'Good old servants that had been five years in a house hadn't ought to be suspected of doing things underhanded. That there wasn't no credit in serving suspicious ladies who went sniffing about to know what the kitchen dinner was. That she, for her part, didn't care how soon she made a change in her servitude, and that she'd be bound for it her sister would feel the same;' and so she will," said Mrs. Ullathorne, "and I am miserable about it, for the cook is the

best cook I ever had in the house, and they are both as good women as ever lived."

"Say that you think so—they will soon forgive you."

"No, that is not my way. I can scold a person when it is needful, but I don't like to run and put a patch on next minute. I can't lower myself in that way."

Lady Brooke was silent a moment; she was puzzled.

Miss Cochrane came creeping in, the unwilling bearer of bad news.

"Mary has just gone out. I was looking out of the window in the dining-room, and saw her go, looking very black and determined."

"She has gone to the registry-office," cried Mrs. Ullathorne—"gone to seek a place, and has left the kitchen-maid to spoil our dinner."

"I met Hannah on the stairs a minute since, and she asked me to ask you if you would kindly speak to her for five minutes in the breakfast-room, if Lady Brooke was spending the afternoon."

"She wants to give me notice. What an unfortunate woman I am! Honora, can't you help me? I'd give five hundred pounds to keep them."

"Less would do it," said Lady Brooke.

"I can't humble myself."

"No, you can't; leave all to me. I have an idea. Miss Cochrane, will you kindly contrive to see Hannah, if that is her name. Do not say you gave her message to Mrs. Ullathorne, but say her mistress looks very ill—very ill indeed. Please say that, and appear very much alarmed. Do it well."

"Now we must act a little," said Lady Brooke, when she was gone; "pretend a little, I mean."

"I don't understand. I can't act or tell lies," said Mrs. Ullathorne.

"Who can?" cried Lady Brooke, aghast. "I would not on any account do such a thing. You must just pretend to be ill. When servants think you are ill, they are angels. Have you never noticed that? They won't say an unpleasant word to you if you follow my advice."

"I am ill—there need be no pretense about that—very ill. This has quite upset me—quite!"

"Well, then, lie down, on your bed. I will cover you with rugs and draw the blinds down, and Miss Cochrane will keep the door locked, and see that no one disturbs you."

"Oh, no, I can't do that! Besides, they will only give me notice to-morrow instead of to-day."

"I'll secure you against that."

"Oh, no, no. I really—"

But at this moment Miss Cochrane came nervously in and said, "Hannah knows you are ill, and she still wants to see you. She says she won't detain you more than five minutes. Not when Lady Brooke is here, of course. She will wait till she leaves."

"But I can't leave when Mrs. Ullathorne is feeling so ill," said Lady Brooke. "I am going to get her to lie down a while. Will you please send one of the under-servants off in a cab for the doctor? Tell her to make the greatest possible haste."

Miss Cochrane went.

Mrs. Ullathorne looked obstinate.

"What is the use of this? They can easily wait till to-morrow. They can say all they want to say in the morning."

"But get the doctor to order you abroad for two or three months. They will like being left alone in the house, and the moment they hear that there is a prospect of it they will say no more about leaving you, and when you come home you can go on as if this had never happened."

"What a clever woman you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Ullathorne.

"Oh, no! I am only straining every nerve to help you. If we can but keep them both away from you until the doctor has ordered you to go from home, all danger is over. I am quite sure they won't give up their places after they have heard that. You must be quick, though. We must act a little."

"Bessie Cochrane will tell them. She is in league with

them," cried Mrs. Ullathorne, though she did not quite believe what she was saying.

"Then, we will only tell her what we want them to know," said Lady Brooke composedly.

"Oh, you clever woman! you clever, bad woman!" thought Mrs. Ullathorne.

To lie down on a bed and look ill involved no acting on her part. She did feel ill, though she would not have dreamed of going to bed unless Lady Brooke had proposed it, nay, more, had not talked her into feeling more and more of an invalid in real earnest. She looked wretchedly ill when Lady Brooke had arranged her a little, with a white handkerchief round her forehead, and had darkened the room. Preston, Mrs. Ullathorne's maid, was own cousin to Mary the cook and her sister. Lady Brooke kept her out of the way, therefore, until all preparations were made. Then she was brought and saw her usually truculent mistress lying thus, pale, faint, and apparently speechless.

"She seems very ill," said Lady Brooke, taking her aside. "She says she wants to be left quiet until the doctor comes; but I wish you would stay with me; I am afraid to be alone with her, Preston. I know she likes you about her. She often named you in her letters to India. She seems to think so very highly of you."

"Keeps her fine words for her letter-writing, then, as it seems," said the aggrieved Preston. "I am sure I don't know about her high opinion of any of us. It is just the other way, I think!"

"Oh, don't mind a sharp speech now and then," replied Lady Brooke. "She has a high opinion of you, I am sure."

"Well, I am not going to say anything to put her about to-day when she is ill, but to-morrow morning me, and Hannah, and Mary the cook, we are all going to give her a month's notice; we are resolved."

"Well, you must do as you like, of course, but say nothing to-day. She is not a young woman, you know!

Sometimes a very slight illness turns out very seriously with a person of her age. We are all here to-day and gone to-morrow, and if you were unkind to her, and found she had died, leaving you all large legacies, it would be very painful to you. Persons of her ample fortune generally do provide for their servants, and I imagine you will find yourselves well remembered."

The doctor came. Lady Brooke saw him, gave him his cue, and took him into the darkened room, where Preston sat on one side of the bed and Miss Cochrane on the other. He uttered a number of medical commonplaces which seemed to mean a great deal, and further declared that, if Mrs. Ullathorne could but go abroad a while, she would soon be herself again. Kreuznach was the place he recommended. Could Mrs. Ullathorne start in a day or two—the sooner the better?

Mrs. Ullathorne looked at Preston.

"You can soon prepare your mistress's things, I know," said he encouragingly. "And you, madam—you can go? You have no arrangements to make which need detain you here? You have trustworthy people in the house?"

"Oh, most trustworthy," replied Mrs. Ullathorne.

That did not seem strong enough to Lady Brooke, who said, "My sister has been telling me how fortunately she is situated. She has two sisters who have been with her a long time, and she could leave her house for any length of time without the least anxiety—they are so thoroughly to be trusted. Did you not say so, Mrs. Ullathorne?"

"Yes, I did. It is quite true—thoroughly true."

"Very few are so fortunate," said the doctor.

The maid's face grew brighter, and he continued:

"Then you will go to Kreuznach, and stay there till you feel better? I will give you something which will cure you of this attack, but you won't be really well without a thorough change. I do not mean to confine you to Kreuznach. After you have been there a while you might go somewhere else. I suppose you will be in no hurry to get home?"

"Oh dear no! I am very fond of traveling when once I get away."

So that was settled, and he went, and Preston escorted him to the door.

"But if those two women still give me notice?" said Mrs. Ullathorne. She spoke very feebly; Lady Brooke's little bit of acting had had a most comical effect on her: she now firmly believed that she had narrowly escaped an extremely dangerous illness.

"Oh, they won't. They will be only too glad to have a holiday. Just think what a fine thing for them your going away will be! They will practically be the mistresses of this charming house, and will have no work to do."

"I like people to have work to do," growled Mrs. Ullathorne faintly.

"Well, I dare say it is better, both for their bodies and minds; but if they have none, they can do none."

Presently Mrs. Ullathorne looked up and said, "I have been thinking over all you have been saying about their enjoying their holiday so much and being mistresses of this house."

"Yes, poor things! it will be a nice rest for them."

"I like what we have done so far as keeping them is concerned; but I don't like the idea of leaving this house so completely at their mercy. They could fill it with their own friends if they liked—no one would ever know."

"There is that to consider. But you trust them so implicitly."

"H'm. Only so far—I trust no one thoroughly; that's the best way."

"Then it does seem a pity we have arranged this, for of course you leave a great deal in their power."

"I don't think I'll go. Dangerous as it may be for me to disobey the doctor's orders, I really do not think I'll go," said Mrs. Ullathorne.

"Then they will."

"Oh, dear! is all that to begin again?"

"Is there no one whom you could ask to stay here—

who would see that they went on quietly and took care of your house and furniture? Would the Raymonds do? They come up to town, don't they?"

Mrs. Ullathorne forgot she was an invalid, and started up.

"Honora! I have not quite taken leave of my senses! The Raymonds would be worse than any amount of bad servants! They would destroy everything I have in the house; they would dance in it, and smoke, and alter the furniture. No, whatever it costs me, I'll not leave home."

"There is Selina. She could come here once or twice a week and see how things were going on."

"Scribbling goose! Do you think her supervision would be valuable?"

"Dr. Brooke might have some patient who would take your house for a month or two."

Mrs. Ullathorne shook her head. "I will stay where I am. I'll not leave home."

"Would you like me to come here while you are away? I was intending to pay a series of visits, but I would gladly give them up if I could be of any service to you. Would it make you more comfortable to have me here?"

"That might do," said Mrs. Ullathorne doubtfully; "but you would run away to your visits as soon as my back was turned, and leave the house to take care of itself."

"Oh, no, dear; I promise you, if I come, I will never go away for more than a day or two, and not at all if you object. I should live very quietly of course—very—I have no power of doing otherwise. Chesterfield and I have children to provide for."

"Well," said Mrs. Ullathorne benignly, "if you decide on doing me this favor, I shall be very much obliged to you—very. I won't forget it."

"Oh, I would gladly do more than that for you."

"And you will keep a sharp look-out on the servants?—the best of them require that. These are good enough—admirable in some ways—but you never know."

"No, indeed, you never know," said Lady Brooke, and Mrs. Ullathorne thought her a most sensible woman.

"You had better not say anything to them about my com-

ing, until after you have left. Write to them from Paris. If they don't give you notice to-morrow, they won't do it at all. I'll take care to do nothing to put them in a bad humor."

"I'll pay their wages, of course, while I am away," said Mrs. Ullathorne, "and I should have had to give them board wages, so you must allow me to pay your house-keeping too. You had better let the cook provide all you want, and it can go into my account with her. She is economical and full of contrivance, so it will make very little difference to me at the end of the year."

Very little difference to Mrs. Ullathorne, but all the difference to Lady Brooke who was by no means able to live as she liked.

"You are sure, Honora, that you won't discover in a week or two that you have made an arrangement that is very inconvenient to you? I want you to be quite sure you can go through with this."

"I am quite sure. I am certain."

She was certain. And well she might be, for she had been gradually leading Mrs. Ullathorne to make her this offer ever since she entered the house.

"And now I have got a good house over my head, and good servants and food provided for the next few months, I ought to make some use of my luck, and I will try," said Lady Brooke to herself as she went home. She frisked into the study—what were pen-and-ink heroines to her now, that she should feel for them? She frisked gayly in and said, "I am going to keep Mrs. Ullathorne's house for her. She is going abroad for her health, and I am going to Kensington Square till she comes back."

Olive, who was copying a blotted MS., looked up; she was afraid she would have to go too.

"You won't take my Olive away?" said Mrs. Brooke, who loved her niece dearly.

"I will! I must! I shall!"

When Dr. Brooke heard what had happened, he asked for five minutes' conversation with Lady Brooke. "I have not much to say," said he, when she appeared, "but Selina tells me that you wish to take Olive away from us

for a while. She is like our own child now, and I almost think we might have been allowed to keep her. Chesterfield insists on it, I hear."

Lady Brooke, who was never quite at her ease with Dr. Brooke, showed him a letter from Chesterfield in which he said, "I wish you to take Olive to live with you while in England. Thank Richard and Selina most heartily for the great kindness which they have shown her, but tell them that we must now resume the care of her. I feel strongly on this point, as you know, and must be imperative in my request."

"He need not be so," observed Dr. Brooke with much suppressed feeling. "He might have left her here. She is like a child of our own to us, and it would have been better for all concerned."

Lady Brooke did not speak. She perhaps thought her husband's letter had spoken for her.

"Well, I have one request to make, Lady Brooke," (he never called her Honora). "Promise me most solemnly that you will keep from Olive all knowledge of certain circumstances (you know what I refer to) which would give her pain. We have always done so. She knows nothing of them. Promise this solemnly."

"I do promise most solemnly. She shall never learn them from me."

CHAPTER XL

With silken coats, and caps, and golden rings,
With ruffs, and cuffs, and farthingales and things;
With scarfs, and fans, and double change of bravery,
With amber bracelets, beads, and all this knavery.
Taming of the Shrew.

"I WISH your Aunt Ullathorne had felt it to be one of her duties to buy you four or five pretty dresses," said Lady Brooke, one day, soon after she had taken up her abode in Kensington Square.

"But I have just had two new ones," said Olive. "They were made the week before you came home."

"Oh, you can't wear those hor—I mean, those dresses would not look well here. You require a Pre-Raphaelite house to make a Pre-Raphaelite dress look well," said Lady Brooke, who was careful not to be too outspoken. "I must see what I can do for you. I wish your papa would get into the habit of writing bigger checks for me."

Mrs. Raymond was coming to luncheon. She had been spending Easter in Rome, and had just returned. She entered while they were speaking. "You can't think, Honora," said she, "what a weight your being here removes from me. It is so dreadful to know that coming to London means going to see my sister Ullathorne. I would rather walk ten miles than do that; and I hate walking."

All the time Mrs. Raymond was speaking, her eyes were straying to Olive. Presently that young lady left the room. "Honora," said Mrs. Raymond hesitatingly, "I want to say something to you, but before I do so will you answer one question?"

"Yes."

"How do you like Olive's style of dress?"

"I do not like it at all. I can't endure it!"

"Then, I need not be afraid to speak. What I wished to say was this: I think it perfectly hideous! Dressed as she is, I would not be seen with her for any money! It is Selina's taste, I suppose?"

Lady Brooke made a rapid sign in the affirmative. She could not trust herself to speak of this family misfortune.

"Well, I recommend you to make a bundle of all Olive's dresses and treat them as Carlyle is said to treat his pipes."

"How?"

"They say he allows himself the indulgence of a new pipe every day, but as he does not like to throw the discarded one quite away, he always puts it on the step of his door at night—it is gone in the morning."

"Ah, how I should like to do that! But how am I

to re-equip her? Dresses cost money. Would you believe it!—I only afforded myself two when I was in Paris, and they were nothing to look at, but they came to more than a hundred and twenty pounds!

"I know," murmured Mrs. Raymond feelingly; "and men think that we can look well for nothing. I suppose you want to get Olive married?"

"Yes; Chesterfield is very anxious to do all he can for her. I hope she will marry."

"I do not wonder at your wishing it. It is extremely desirable for a girl situated as she is to get married as quickly as possible."

Upon this the two ladies had some private and confidential conversation, during the course of which they made some arrangement for next day which resulted in Lady Brooke's saying to Olive next morning, "I want you to look your very best. Aunt Raymond is coming for us at two o'clock. Be ready to go out with her when she comes, and please take great pains with your appearance. Let me see; put on that navy-blue dress, and calm down your hair a little."

"Where are we going?"

"You will see when the time comes. Run away and get ready, and don't hurry your operations."

"Mrs. Raymond came. She inspected Olive most carefully. She altered her hair a little, gave some amicable twists and turns to such articles of attire as were movable, bade her get into the carriage, and said, "She must not sit with her back to the horses, Honora—not in going, I mean; that often makes even a good-looking girl turn so white that she seems positively plain." So Olive was judiciously placed, and they set out. She felt that the eyes of these two ladies were fixed on her without intermission. They were criticising her most minutely and weighing her in some worldly balance. To what distinguished personage was she about to be presented? "Do say where we are going," said she imploringly.

"To make a call," was the only answer she obtained.

"Can you come with me for one moment to Madame

Filoselle's?" said Mrs. Raymond; "I want to speak to her, but I won't keep you a moment. Exmoor Street is not out of your way."

"Of course we will come. We like going to a milliner's—don't we, Olive! You and I have not the talent to write books like dear Aunt Selina; we must have some employment for our minds."

They rang at Madame Filoselle's bell, and were shown into a handsome drawing-room, where there was little to reveal that lady's calling but two or three books of patterns bound in Russia-leather. Mrs. Raymond said a few words about some dress she had ordered, and then she drew Olive into conversation. Olive was turning over a book of patterns.

"Which would you like, if you were asked to choose a dress for yourself?"

"This," said Olive, pointing to a pretty creamy-white texture, something between silk and gauze.

"If I had been asked to choose a very becoming dress for mademoiselle, that is the very dress I should have picked out," said Madame Filoselle.

Olive looked at it regretfully. Such dresses were for the rich and great. "And that is pretty too," said she. This time it was a nondescript willowy-green.

"Very pretty," cried all three.

"But they are all pretty," said Olive; "far too pretty to look at unless one is able to choose two or three of them."

She put the pattern-book down.

The milliner was watching her as narrowly as the two ladies had done erewhile.

"Couldn't I have a bonnet like my new dress?" said Mrs. Raymond. "I must be *en suite*. Have you any bonnets I could look at to see which shape I had better decide on?"

She carelessly strolled into the other room as she spoke, and though she was passing a series of bonnets in review, Olive saw that she was talking earnestly all the while. Presently by a slight gesture she summoned Lady Brooke.

"Sit still, Olive," said that lady. "Aunt Raymond

wants me for a moment, I see; but I would rather you stayed here. Rest, dear."

"Oh, for the formidable interview which lies before me," thought Olive. "I was beginning to forget about that."

She watched her mother and the two others as they talked and fingered the bonnets. After a while they left the room.

Madame Filoselle was the first to return.

"We have been arranging about a dress for you, mademoiselle. One of my ladies will take your measure."

"A dress for me!" cried Olive, astonished, for she had had a great many of late.

The lady came, and in a minute or so Olive's measure was taken.

"And now sign your name here, mademoiselle," said Madame Filoselle—"here, at the bottom of this page."

What this page contained Olive knew not, for a piece of blotting-paper hid it. She looked inquiringly at her mother.

"It is usual, dear," said Mrs. Raymond, and Olive signed, and then her mother and Mrs. Raymond, added their names. After this they left, and Mrs. Raymond and Lady Brooke seemed to forget about the call, the prospect of which was now once more so alarming to Olive, and ordered the coachman to turn into the park. Olive was glad of the respite, and soon forgot her fears. It was late in April, and the weather had been very cold that year. All the buds had been long in coming out, but were now thrusting forth their tender heads and, seen from afar, looked like a delicate golden mist. "How pretty it used to be at Austerfield when the buds first began to come out, and how delighted Willie and I used to be with them! How we used to like to pick the sticky little sycamore leaves out of their rosy pink sheaths! How tightly they were packed up! I believe Willie and I could have sat all day peeping into the little contrivances flowers and leaves have for taking care of themselves. After all, it was a very nice way of spending our time. I have never been so happy since. I wish—" Here Olive's meditations were

interrupted; for she was struck by the repetition of the word "court dresses." "Court dresses! What were they talking about? Court dresses for whom?"

"You say you will get yours from Paris," said Mrs. Raymond, "and I think you are right, if your woman is in the habit of making for you; but Olive's will have to be made by Madame Filoselle. I dare say she will do it as well as any one."

"I going to court!" cried Olive.

"Hush!" cried Lady Brooke. "Don't begin to talk about it until it is all arranged."

Olive felt herself snubbed, and turned away to look at her buds again; but she could not confine her thoughts to them as before, and when she tried to divert them to Austerfield and Willie, it did not seem so nice to sit and pick sticky sycamore leaves out of their protecting pink sheaths as it had been before court dresses were spoken of. She felt bewildered. A visit to court seemed to her a thing as much out of the question as a visit to fairy-land, for never before had she been with people who would have given a word or a thought to such a thing. Suddenly the carriage stopped at a dull house in a dull street. "Now I must look my best!" thought Olive; "this is the place." But no one seemed to care how she looked, and the lady whom they were visiting was all but blind. Then they hurried home, for they were going out to dine.

Early next morning, Olive was informed that a "lady" had come from Madame Filoselle's to fit her with some stays.

"I don't want stays," cried she; "I have never worn them till lately. Mine are new."

"Madame Filoselle won't make dresses for people who wear ill-fitting stays. Run away. She thinks all ill-fitting but her own. Let the woman who tries them on say which you are to have. She knows better than you."

Olive obeyed.

"I expect a parcel coming while I am here," said the "lady." "Madame Filoselle wishes you to select your underclothing from the parcel of things she is submitting

to you. She wishes me to stay and give you any assistance in my power in helping you to make your choice."

"Who is going to pay for all this?" was Olive's thought: but she did not like to give it utterance.

"Don't you think there is some mistake?" she said. "I don't believe that mamma ordered anything but a dress."

"No, mademoiselle, there is no mistake. Madame Filoselle told me to come to-day, and she said I was to be sure to see that you chose a becoming outfit."

"Outfit? Where am I going?"

"Into the world, miss. Young ladies always want a complete set of new things when once they begin to go into society."

Olive thought she was dreaming. Was she, who had never known any life but a quiet one, who was familiar with nothing but the dull house in Harley Street and the hedgerows of Austerfield, to be suddenly transplanted and live in the full glitter of the sun?

A large parcel arrived. Two servants tottered under its weight as it came upstairs. Olive's garments had been rather plain. These were embroidered, and trimmed, and daintily finished. "They can't be meant for me," said she, full of wonder at their fineness and elaboration of ornament.

"Oh, yes; there is no mistake, I assure you," said the "lady;" and then she pulled out a notebook and pencil, and laid them on the table, ready to write down each article which was to be ordered. There were about half-a-dozen different specimens of each article of wearing-apparel, and as Olive's choice was made, one dozen of each was inscribed in the "lady's" book. Besides these, there were boxes of pocket-handkerchiefs of various degrees of fineness, stockings, gloves, sleeves, collars, and habit-shirts.

"It is absurd of me to go on ordering things!" cried Olive—"quite absurd! We are only wasting our time, for I am sure there is some mistake." And she rang the bell, and sent the maid who answered it, to bring Lady Brooke without delay.

"It is all right," said that lady reassuringly. "Your Aunt Selina was very kind and sweet to you, but she was not the best person to equip a young girl for her introduction to society, for she has no idea what is wanted. Don't look so frightened, Olive. You are not going to have such an overpowering number of new things, after all! Madame Filoselle is only going to send you a complete set of clothing. She and I have taken you in hand, and we are going to reform you from head to foot."

"But such handsome, good things! I thought I was to be economical."

Lady Brooke smiled. "Let this person who is helping you have her way, dear. You are in good hands."

The "lady" was half amused, half impatient. She showed Lady Brooke what had been already ordered, and said, "The rest of the things will come to-morrow."

So they did. Next day came bonnets, hats, and flowers for the hair. "I feel like an exhausted receiver!" cried Olive, who knew something of scientific expressions from her uncle, but was vague in her method of using them. A mantle and shawl followed, and last came not the one willowy-green dress which Olive expected, but the white one also, trimmed with silk and lilies of the valley, and white butterflies for her hair; and the box was by no means empty when these two dresses were taken out, for beneath them were a pretty light-blue cashmere, and another evening dress. In short, Olive now had everything she could possibly wear or wish to wear for some time to come. She went with her mother to Madame Filoselle, and that lady was justly enchanted with the transformation she had worked. Olive resigned herself to the possession of all these lovely things—she whose wardrobe had once been so circumscribed had now pretty dresses for all occasions, and bonnets or headgear of the lighter sort, and shoes, gloves, nay, even fans to match them. "Mother," said she one day, "you are far too generous to me. I could very well have worn some of my old things; they were quite good still. You don't buy one quarter so many things for yourself as you do for me."

"Of course not!" said Lady Brooke; "it would be very strange if I did."

Olive looked inquiringly.

"You silly child, don't you understand what a pleasure it is to me to see you look pretty and be admired? When is the next Millennium soirée?"

"Poor mamma! you did not enjoy that evening."

"I don't know. I should like to go to another. Let us go and see your Aunt Selina, and ask her to take us with her. Put on one of your Pre-Raphaelite dresses, my dear. You may as well wear those things out in private life. We are not going anywhere else. It will conciliate her."

Mrs. Brooke was in trouble. Her husband was very ill. He had been working too hard, and had had a strong warning that his brain would not stand such undue exertion. He was ordered abroad for a thorough rest and change, and was advised to go at once.

"We are both going," said Mrs. Brooke. "I am glad now that Olive is with you, for we could not very well have taken her, and I should not have known where to leave her. He is really very ill, Honora. I am very anxious."

"You must be. So am I—most anxious. Selina, could you give us tickets for the next soirée at the Millennium?"

Mrs. Brooke did not notice her scanty sympathy; did not wonder at her asking for an invitation to a place where she hated to go; never dreamed that she wanted to see Sir John Ellerton again in order to ask him to visit her in Kensington Square. Mrs. Brooke was not suspicious, and her thoughts were full of her husband. "We go in three days," said she. "I feel miserable about Richard."

"Don't be miserable about Richard; he only wants rest."

"Olive," said Mrs. Brooke, "you could do me a good turn. I have sent out invitations for a large party on the twentieth of next month. Will you write in my name

and explain why it must be put off? Here is a list of the people I asked."

"Are the addresses there?" inquired Olive, who knew her aunt's ways.

But for once Mrs. Brooke had been methodical. She had made up a bundle of letters of acceptance, and of course each bore its writer's address. She put these in Olive's hand, and the one at the top began, "Mr. W. K. Morrison has much pleasure in accepting—"

Olive stared at it in silence. Her heart was touched by the sight. During all these days of opening parcels of pretty things from the milliner, she had never had time to think of Willie. She had not had many frocks when she knew him, and those she wore then cost little thought or money. "Tell me about him," said she, pointing to the note. "Who is he?"

"A man who paints the most lovely pictures. Mr. Denbigh begged for an invitation for him. Honora, you had better let Mr. Denbigh bring him to see you. They say he is so clever!"

"I am glad to hear it, dear; but I don't think I want to see him. I do not mean to have company of that kind. I can't. I had to make Olive break a dancing-engagement with Mr. Willoughby."

Olive fingered the note vaguely. She knew it was not from her Willie, but still it possessed an odd attraction for her. She wished the party could have taken place. She would have liked to see this Mr. W. K. Morrison. He was, at any rate, almost a namesake.

When Lady Brooke met Sir John Ellerton at the Millennium, she quite forgot that she did not want many visitors in Kensington Square. The door of the house was flung open before him, and he was made to feel that he would be welcome at any time. He did come frequently, and Lady Brooke bought a copy of "Our Acreocracy," in which it stood revealed that estates in Yorkshire, Cumberland, and Scotland produced for him an income of 17,000*l.* a year. "That book is very sordid reading," said she to Olive when she had mastered her

subject. "I'll take it away. Put some poetry or something of that kind on the table."

But now all Lady Brooke's mind was given to Olive's first drawing-room. She took her to a professional lady, who tied a voluminous table-cloth round her waist and gathered it up train-wise to show her pupils how to manage such appendages when the time came. She had solemn interviews with Madame Filoselle and others. All said Olive would look sweet on the occasion, and all were triumphantly right. She did look especially pretty.

Lady Brooke had not been to court for years, and was comparatively a stranger in English society; but Mrs. Raymond was not, and Mrs. Raymond seemed bent on introducing her to every one worth knowing. Olive, accustomed to Mrs. Brooke's literary folks, and to them only, suddenly found herself in a new world. She was rather oppressed by it; she wondered how Mrs. Raymond could look so happy. Mrs. Raymond was happy, and thoroughly at home. Now and then Olive heard fragments of conversation which proved this. Once or twice she heard herself named, always in the most flattering terms. That, she supposed, was due to politeness. All were courtiers and courtly here. An old lady, evidently an intimate friend of Mrs. Raymond's, was speaking to her now. Olive could not avoid hearing what she said. "I did not know your niece was so old. How fast time does go! Poor thing! How pretty she is! What a sad thing for her!"

"Hush!" said Mrs. Raymond softly. "She knows nothing about it. We think it better to keep it from her."

"Much better. You are quite right. It would only be giving her useless pain. She is a charming girl, to be sure. I am so sorry for her, but I hope she will marry soon—that would be the best thing that could happen."

"Much the best. I hope and trust she will."

After this people came and went. High-born ladies said a few gracious words to Olive, but she was weary with waiting so long in the ante-room, and could not forget what she had heard, or cease to wonder at it. Why was she so

to be pitied? Because her father was so far away from her in India—because her uncle was ill—that must be the reason, and he was going to die. No greater grief could befall her than that.

The first thing she said, when, exhausted by this unaccustomed scene, she huddled herself into the Raymond's carriage with her mother and aunt, was, "Please tell me something—I am miserable until I know. Is Uncle Richard going to die? Is he so ill that he can't recover?"

"Of course not, you silly child! What can have put that into your head?"

"I am so unhappy about him—so afraid that you are only saying that to comfort me."

"His complete recovery is certain, if he will consent to take a proper amount of rest. How can you doubt it? What has put such a fancy into your mind? You had no such fear this morning."

"Something I heard—"

"You are foolish; you have made some mistake. Don't be silly, Olive; you are going to be a great success, I can see that."

"Am I?" said Olive, perfectly uninterested. "I feel very strange and unhappy. Do tell me why people pity me, and call me poor thing; and what unhappy or unfortunate thing is being kept from me; I know there is something, and you must tell me," and she turned imploringly to Mrs. Raymond, "for I heard you talking about it to the lady in light-gray velvet and pearls."

Lady Brooke and Mrs. Raymond looked at each other with eyes full of meaning. The latter said promptly, "Olive, you are dreaming. I have never said a word about you all the morning, except to thank any of my friends who came to tell me that you were a pretty girl. If I had known that you were going to talk in this foolish way as soon as we got into the carriage, I should have said, 'Yes, she is pretty, but, poor child, you have no idea how stupid she is.'"

Olive smiled faintly; she was only partly convinced.

"What a blessing it is to know that Mrs. Ullathorne is

out of England!" observed Mrs. Raymond. "Do you know, I feel as if an oppressive weight were removed now that she is gone. She got to know of all our doings, and never approved of any of them, and we were forced to listen to her wonderful speeches and never resent them. Tiresome woman! I wonder how often she would see us if she were poor, or how much range we should grant her tongue if she lost all her money? Here we are at Falkland Houses? Don't you think our house rather nice? but it's only a hired one—we are not so well off as you. By the by, are you pretty comfortable at Sister Ullathorne's? She bullies every one but her servants, and spoils them until they are unbearable. And then every now and then she breaks out, insults them all, and they leave in a body. I suppose, if they were ever so disagreeable, you would not dare to turn them away?"

"Of course not. That is my tenure of office; but I am perfectly comfortable."

"They used to make a fuss when Sister Ullathorne had a few friends to dinner—they said it gave them trouble."

"Sister Ullathorne only asks plain men and women," said Lady Brooke, laughing. "That is so silly of her. Servants will run themselves off their legs for any one with a title—they enjoy it. I know quite well how to manage them."

"And every one else too," thought Mrs. Raymond, who, though she was forming a very strong alliance with her Indian sister-in-law, was quite aware of her powers. "Good-by. I am very tired! You are coming to us this evening, Honora?—be punctual."

"Sir John Ellerton is going to dine with us," replied Lady Brooke, "and Mrs. Ptolomais; she won't stay late, though, and I suppose I may bring him with me?"

"Of course you may," said Mrs. Raymond with a meaning glance at Olive, who was looking out of the window.

"Good-by, then; thank you for taking us to-day. By the by, I shall not be so afraid of moving about next week—I am going to have the use of Dr. Brooke's carriage while he is away. Selina asked him to let me have it. It

looks rather professional, but I don't mind that—it will be an immense comfort to me. *Au revoir.*”

“It is simply astounding,” said Mrs. Raymond to her husband. “That woman’s genius is prodigious! She has not been in London a month, and yet she has contrived to find people willing to supply her with everything she can want or wish for. She has a better house than we have, and it does not cost her a penny, and now she has a carriage, and very soon—”

“You could have had the carriage yourself if you had asked for it. I wish you had. It would have done for me, and you could have had ours all to yourself.”

“But it would never have occurred to me to ask for it. That thinking of things so promptly is just what is so very clever in Honora.”

When Lady Brooke entered her drawing-room it was full of lovely flowers. She had “chanced” to say in Sir John Ellerton’s hearing, how wretched it was to her to live in rooms without flowers, and he had felt it to be a privilege to send her some.

CHAPTER XII.

I cannot but remember such things were,
That were most precious to me.—*Macbeth.*

Queen. What would she have?
Hor. She speaks much of her father.—*Hamlet.*

MRS. ULLATHORNE’S drawing-room was certainly a very agreeable room at any time, and doubly so now that she herself was not occupying it. The sun shone pleasantly through the three large south windows which looked on the square, and the back drawing-room was made cheerful by the glimpse of the top of some fine old sycamore-trees which grew with quite majestic dignity in the long strip of garden at the back of the house. The spring had been wet and cold, so no one had the heart to

shut out a single ray of sunshine, or fragment of clear sky. Olive was sitting in a low chair by the window reading her Aunt Selina's last new novel. All for love of her, Olive was reading it; for, though it had just come out, she had read it, and copied it, and heard it read aloud, until she could almost have repeated the whole three volumes by heart. Olive's dress was very pretty, and made of some faint white Indian stuff trimmed with old gold satin. The sun flickered on this and illuminated soft warm patches, and filled every fold with reflected light, and caught the tawny satin and made it burn with a new richness, or rested on Olive herself, lending depth to the splendor of her deep eyes, and heightening the delicacy of her wonderfully delicate complexion. She was rather sad. She had, as it would seem, everything the world could give her, but she felt suddenly cut off from the companionship of all who loved her. They were few in number certainly; but Dr. Brooke had always been as loving to her as a father, and Mrs. Brooke, in spite of her absurdities, was a very kind-hearted, good woman, and intensely fond of Olive whenever she had time to think of her. Now, though she was with her own mother, she did not feel half as much at home as she had done with her uncle and aunt. Lady Brooke was polite, always kindly ready to take an interest in anything which concerned Olive, but she never went beyond this—never showed more affection than she might have felt for a pleasant visitor. In point of fact, Olive felt very much like a visitor, and had difficulty in believing that she was the daughter of the pretty lady who was now her daily companion. She constantly found herself imagining a time when this unreal existence—this life of dressing and gayety—would come to an end, and she would be at home again with her dear uncle and aunt, and would look on this visit to Lady Brooke as a dream. So far as it went it was a pleasant dream. They had spent nearly two months in perpetually dressing for different kinds of entertainments. Gay luncheons had been swiftly followed by garden parties or afternoon concerts; dinner-parties had been squeezed in between balls and soirées; operas,

theaters, and lawn-tennis parties had been enjoyed whenever a spare hour or so could be found for them. How much of their lives during the last eight weeks had been spent on the great main roads, hurrying home from one scene of pleasure with barely time to dress before another? Olive had thoroughly enjoyed the excitement of this perpetual change, but she painfully felt the need of some one who loved her. In Harley Street her uncle's eyes always brightened when he saw her; and she never entered the study without a kind word from her aunt, though it might be little more than—"Oh, it is you, darling; do sit down, but don't speak until I give you leave." Now, though Olive did not go so far as to make the actual comparison, Lady Brooke treated her much as a milliner treats a lay figure. She was careful to see that her daughter was well dressed and well placed, and then, so long as they happened to be alone together, she took very little further notice of her. When visitors came, Lady Brooke always placed her in the best possible light; but Olive pined for a word or two of kindness when no one was there. The words "dear" and "darling" fell trippingly enough from Lady Brooke's tongue, but they had no inner warmth—they were only used conventionally. Moreover, Olive felt as if Lady Brooke either placed a barrier between herself and her father and brothers and sisters, or did not care to remove one which by some accident already existed. She continually spoke of Sir Chesterfield, but never as if Olive would have much to do with him; nor did she ever seem to look forward to the time when Olive and her brothers and sisters would all live together, or do anything to draw them nearer to each other now. Lady Brooke wrote long letters to India to her husband, and to Lausanne to the girls, but she never showed Olive their answers, or asked her to write to them, or gave her a message from them, or tried in any way to make her feel as if she were anything to them. Olive often thought of these things with surprise and pain. She dropped her book now to think of them once more. Lady Brooke was writing, and if Olive could have seen her letter, she might have read:—"Do not be unhappy

about Olive. I always told you that it was foolish to be so, and now she is with me I say so still more strongly. She has every chance of doing extremely well. She has every possible advantage. Thanks to our own friends and to your sister Esther's kind introductions, we have had ample opportunity of enjoying society. Olive is remarkably beautiful; a little dreamy and not a little romantic, but I think that is easily to be accounted for by the odd way in which she has been brought up. Sir John Ellerton is very much in love with her. She is not aware of it yet, and I do not mean to enlighten her; indeed, I did not attach much importance to the matter myself until three weeks ago, when he brought his mother to call on us. She is a dear old lady, as good and kind as can be, but much too full of the importance of her family and of her son to come here and sanction any love-affair with poor dear Olive, if she had not seen that he was so thoroughly in earnest that it would be impossible to make him take the disadvantages of such an alliance into account. He will be a very good husband for her, for he has at least 20,000*l.* a year. They will probably be married some time in the autumn or winter. I shall leave Amabel with them in England, for I am sure India will never suit her, and return to you with the younger girls; and then I think we may all be very happy together if you will only take brighter views of everything. Anyhow, if Olive gets such an extremely desirable husband as Sir John Ellerton is sure to be, I do not see that you need worry yourself any longer on her account; indeed, it will be wrong to me and to your other children if you do." So far had Lady Brooke written when a loud postman's knock announced the arrival of more letters. She grumbled. Olive rejoiced: she said that she liked letters, and often wished that the postman would come twice as often. "You would not get more letters if he did," replied Lady Brooke, but such considerations were too deep for Olive: besides, she was soon absorbed in a letter from her Aunt Selina. Lady Brooke had a packet of letters. Some were invitations, and these she at once answered, and thus some time was spent. "There, that is from your Aunt Ul-

lathorne," said she at length; and as she spoke, she tossed aside a letter with an enormous garden-seat-like monogram as vulgar as modern taste could devise. "I have read it, though I knew there would be something in it to vex me."

It was rather a comical letter. Since Mrs. Ullathorne's departure she had had leisure to think, and had "come to the conclusion that it was very foolish to shrink from saying unpleasant things to servants when benefit to yourself might accrue from doing so." Her letter was full of orders to her sister Honora to be very severe with those whom she was looking after. She was to take the housemaid (lazy thing) to task for this, and the cook for that, and to get about twenty times as much work out of the under-servants as they had ever done before. In fact Lady Brooke had no difficulty in seeing that Mrs. Ullathorne was trying to get her to set every thing a-going in the house which for years she herself had pined to have done but dared not order.

"What will you do?" cried Olive. "I am sure they won't like it."

"Nothing," said Lady Brooke calmly. "The servants are very good creatures, and if your aunt wishes to make these changes she must speak to them herself. Your Aunt Ullathorne is in Italy."

"How delightful! Is she not very happy?"

"She says that she has only gone there because her doctor wished her to stay at Kreuznach. I'll read you what she says: "'The thing which has struck me most in Italy is the hardness of the water.'"

Olive's lip curled.

"Yes, money is oddly distributed," remarked Lady Brooke. "Your Aunt Ullathorne, who would have been completely in her element as matron of a workhouse, ruling her paupers with a rod of iron, is able to have every delight money can procure for her, and finds nothing to astonish her in Italy but the hardness of the water, and has thought of nothing on her way there but how clever it will be to make me do a bit of grinding down her do-

mestics which she dares not do herself; and here am I, who could so enjoy wealth, obliged to think twice before I spend a sixpence! However, I won't complain, for I am very comfortable."

Lady Brooke had a perfect talent for making herself comfortable. She never seemed to exert herself much to secure this happy state, or in any way to oppress those who waited on her, but wherever she went she always, in an incredibly short space of time, gathered around her everything which was at all necessary to her enjoyment. She instinctively knew the warmest corner and easiest chair, and in this she basked gracefully, looking rosy, comely, and caressing, and entirely happy. She did not let Mrs. Ullathorne's letter distress her—nothing ever did distress her much but lack of money. Presently she looked up and said, "Olive, remember this: one of the most important things in this world is to secure a good income; then, if you are unhappy, it must be your own fault. If you have not enough money, you will be worried every hour of your life."

Olive hated talk about money. She lost no time in making some excuse to go into the dining-room to fetch something. It was empty; so she sat down in a chair by the window, and drew aside the white curtain. Not for the sake of looking out, however, for her thoughts were very busy with other things, and she was anxiously wondering if her uncle would ever be well again. She might have been there half an hour, when her eyes rested on a figure which had already passed the window more than once. It was a lady. She was not by any means young, but very handsome, with a beauty of feature which time has no power to alter. She was, however, so pale and haggard and anxious-looking, that Olive felt a throb of pain even at the first glimpse of her. She was plainly, almost humbly dressed, and wore an old black shawl folded tightly round her; nevertheless, she was unmistakably a lady. Her manner was so strange that Olive could not help watching her. She passed backwards and forwards before the window, each time shortening the range of her

little walk, and each time fixing a very earnest, not to say painfully eager, gaze on Olive's face, who in her turn felt so peculiarly attracted by this poor woman that she never removed her eyes from her for a moment. Even when the lady disappeared, Olive, who in her eagerness had risen to her feet, still stood where she was, so certain did it seem that this stranger would return. She did return; again looked most searchingly as before, again passed on; but this time, after walking perhaps two steps, she turned back impetuously, came to the railing immediately in front of the window where Olive was standing, grasped it as if to support herself, and then stood still. Her lips were parted as if to speak; but she faltered, and just as Olive and she were thus standing with eyes riveted on each other's faces, Lady Brooke came in and said, "Olive dear, I quite forgot to remind you— Oh, what is the matter?" cried she, for she saw Olive's startled face. She came to the window; she saw the strange lady. The stranger saw her, and now her gaze was transferred to Lady Brooke, but its character changed, and a look of intense horror came over her wan face. Olive saw this, and saw, too, how pale her mother had grown, and how she trembled.

"What is it?" cried Olive; "who is she? She has been outside such a long time." But Lady Brooke did not speak, and still stood at the window. Suddenly a slim, graceful figure glided swiftly forward, and a lady in whom Olive at once thought she recognized the pretty lady of her youth whose name was Alice put her hand on the strange lady's shoulder. She turned to look at the new-comer, and at that moment Olive saw that, though the one face was serene and peaceful, and the other worn by grief and pain, the features of both were almost identical, and there could be no doubt that the two ladies were sisters. The new-comer said two or three kind words to her sister, took her by the arm, and then gently but firmly led her away. Both cast one look back at the window where Olive and her mother were standing, and both looked at Olive and not at Lady Brooke, and the expression, though full of distress, was kind. Slowly

they disappeared. Olive felt shaken in every nerve. She turned to Lady Brooke, hoping for some explanation.

"What a shock it does give one to see mad people!" ejaculated that lady, with a long sigh of relief, when they were gone. "Olive, we have no time to lose: have you forgotten that we have to be at Mrs. Bertie Warrington's at two?"

"But, mother," said Olive, "don't you know anything about that lady? She looked just as if she knew us. I thought she was going to speak to me."

"Perhaps she was. Keep away from her if she comes again, for it is very dangerous when mad people take it into their heads to mix you up with their fancies!"

"But, mother, do you know nothing of her?—I—"

"Why do you ask if I know her? How can I know her?"

"She looked—"

"She looked uncommonly like Bedlam, and the woman who took her away was not much better. Don't waste more time on them," said Lady Brooke imperatively, for Olive was just going to say that she almost thought the second lady was an old friend of Dr. Brooke's; but Lady Brooke would not listen to her. "We are to dine a little earlier this evening, and go to the opera with old Lady Ellerton. I have just had a note from her. Let us think of your dress for this bazaar—it is a much pleasanter subject than mad women."

CHAPTER XIII.

Pleasures newly found are sweet.—WORDSWORTH

"**O**LIVE, what are you doing, dear?" inquired Lady Brooke.

"Writing to Aunt Selina."

"Don't waste your time; she will never read your letter."

Olive smiled and said, "Oh yes, she will; I know how to avoid all danger of her overlooking it—I never leave a

blank half-sheet. People who do that when they write to Aunt Selina often have a bit of a chapter written on the back of their letters, and then she tears it off and that fragment is lost sight of."

"She is a foolish woman," muttered Lady Brooke unguardedly.

"Mother!" cried Olive. "I love Aunt Selina dearly! She is very kind, and awfully clever!"

Lady Brooke shrugged her shoulders. "She is always sowing laurel-seed, but does any of it ever come up?"

"Do you not like her novels?"

"I like them immensely, but she says she makes no money by them."

"You spoke of laurels—laurels do not imply money."

"Oh! laurels that are genuine are always gilded. But never mind that now; don't think that I do not love your Aunt Selina because I take practical views of things. I am practical; I never do anything unless I hope to benefit by doing it."

Lady Brooke was practical, and had a wonderful gift of turning everything that happened, no matter how unsusceptible of such treatment it might at first sight appear to be, into a means of obtaining some advantage for herself. She had even found a way to profit by Mrs. Ullathorne's last letter, though at first she had resolved to take no notice of it. She soon bethought herself, however, and wrote to tell that lady that having, as in duty bound, conveyed her wishes to her household, she was sorry to say her words had been very ill received. The servants had been quite good and settled before, but the moment she made little complaints, and tried to exact more work from them, it had seemed to revive ill feeling, and one and all they had said that it was scarcely worth while to begin to make any change in their work for the short time they had to stay. Under the circumstances, she advised Mrs. Ullathorne not to return until this fresh outbreak had blown over. Mrs. Ullathorne at once wrote back to thank her kind sister for the hint, and said that she had determined not to return until after Christmas. She hoped her sister

would be able to keep house for her a little longer. She knew that she could not remain in London during the hot months of the year, but did not mind the servants being left then if Honora would return to London in the autumn.

"Do you think we shall leave town, mother?" said Olive, when she heard this.

"Not unless we get some nice invitation, I fear, for your father's last check was not a very large one. I am longing for some fresh air, but I don't know how to get it."

"We could go and spend a few weeks with Aunt Lettice at Austerfield; that would cost nothing, and be delightful."

"I have often heard you speak of the delights of Austerfield," said Lady Brooke dryly. "I believe they consisted in wandering over pasture fields and picking bunches of wild flowers. Do you think you would like a month or two of that kind of life now?"

Olive was silent.

"It is pleasant enough to gather big bunches of buttercups when you are a baby, but one outgrows even that."

Olive sighed. She began to wonder if, amid all the fascinations of a London season as she now knew it, she had lost the capacity of enjoying simple country pleasures. She did not think so—the thought of her happy early life at Austerfield had always power to touch her most profoundly.

Lady Brooke was quick to guess her thoughts, and said, "It is all very well to sit here trying to make yourself believe that you would like to run wild again as you used to do; but, my dear, if I were to pack up a box of plain old dresses for you and send you away to Aunt Lettice, and tell you that you should never see London again, I do not think anything you found at Austerfield would compensate for what you leave behind you here. Depend upon it, you would find it very dull, and would heartily wish yourself back again."

Olive made no answer. Perhaps Lady Brooke was right. It was certainly very delightful to live as she did now, enjoying every pleasure a great capital can offer, but she was not going to live in this way forever. "Is it gay in India?"

she asked, for she often wondered about India, and why her mother never talked of it to her.

"Oh yes, it is gay—it depends, of course, on where you happen to be."

"Where shall we be? Is papa always in the same place?"

"I don't know," replied Lady Brooke absently. "I don't suppose that you will have to go out to India. It is not at all likely—at least, I hope not."

Why did Lady Brooke hope not? Did she not want her there?

"Don't look puzzled, Olive; I can't tell you all my fancies, but my idea is that your life here will be so happy that you will not want to go there. But, Olive, child, see! here is your Aunt Raymond, and you are not ready! You ought to have gone to dress an hour ago."

A life of continual gayety leaves no time for unravelling puzzles or indulging in disagreeable reflections. Olive had only a few minutes to dress for a bazaar, and an important bazaar too. Mrs. Bertie Warrington, the unrivalled beauty of two seasons "last past," had been invited to preside at a stall at one of these gatherings in aid of some popular charity or other, and had hit upon an admirable expedient to make her stall a marked success, and at the same time to prove that she was still, and for many seasons would be, the beauty *par excellence*. She had courageously picked out ten of the very prettiest girls of that season to help her. They were all to be dressed alike; and Mrs. Warrington had devised a Warrington livery, as she called it, in which she and her ten assistants were to appear. They were to wear dresses of the most exquisitely delicate sea-green Japanese crape with buttons of tiny Indian shells. Their hats were to be of the same material, and it is needless to say that hats of this color were not so becoming to all the fair ladies concerned as they might be to Mrs. Bertie Warrington.

"Olive will be here, dear Esther, in one moment; we have been talking, and have forgotten time."

"How is the great event going on?" asked Mrs. Raymond.

"Admirably! I am in great spirits about it. Sir John is a dear fellow." Olive was to go with Mrs. Raymond, but Lady Brooke said she would look in at the bazaar on her way home from some afternoon visits, and bring her back with her. Just as they were about to leave the house, in came Sir John Ellerton, with a lovely bouquet of yellow roses. "They have come from Hillborough," said he; "I sent expressly for yellow roses, as you said the Warrington costume was to be green and gold."

"Green—not green and gold," replied Mrs. Raymond. "The dear lady thought that no one would look well in that color but herself. However, I venture to think—" Here she paused with a triumphant glance at Olive, whose complexion was dazzling, whose eyes flashed with brilliance, and whose dress suited her to perfection.

Olive was following Mrs. Raymond out of the room, when Sir John said rather pathetically, "But my roses, Miss Brooke; I got them on purpose for you; I hoped you would wear some of them to-day at the bazaar."

"Will you take them as a bouquet, Olive, or put some of them in your hat?" asked Lady Brooke, in a voice which admitted of no denial.

"Not as a bouquet, for I must keep my hands free; I am a work-woman to-day." Olive took off her hat and put a few rosebuds in it, and could not but own gratefully that it looked twice as well for the addition. Then Mrs. Raymond carried her off. They were behind time, and not another moment could be spared even to Sir John.

The bazaar was held in one of the fine old gardens which were once common in Kensington, but which are now becoming less numerous every year. Large indeed was the premium, it was whispered, and cruelly brief the lease, which with a mighty rent gave possession of this more than commonly beautiful one. There were grand elm, chestnut, and poplar trees in it, thickets of fragrant flowering shrubs; there was a spacious lawn with borders of old-fashioned flowers, shady walks, and a very pretty fountain; and there was no sign of town, unless it were that, to an epicure in color sensations, the sky at its purest

had not quite the clearness which it had in the country. No intrusive chimney-pot suggested neighbors, and if noise from the humming city came there at all, it was only in one grand wave-like murmur in which all sounds of common life, even down to the well-nigh invincible drone of the street organ, were melted together. It was really hard to believe that there were streets, and omnibuses, and squares, and shops—nay, dens of want and wickedness—within five minutes' walk. To-day, this favored spot was at its brightest; white tents were disposed at regular intervals on the lawn, seats with Persian carpets and Stothard-like figures enjoying them were scattered over it—for though the gentlemen's costume might not have been entirely to that great artist's mind, that of the ladies would probably not have been displeasing to him. A band was playing, and a gay crowd moving to and fro, with brilliant contrasts at every turn between delicate-tinted dresses and deep-green leaves. The tents were for the buyers and sellers. Mrs. Bertie Warrington's stall was in one of the large ones; she had been offered a small one for herself and party, but she preferred to see and be seen. She and some of her subordinate beauties were already there, and putting last touches to some deft bits of arrangement as Olive entered. The flags, flowers, bright wares and gay dresses of the sellers almost dazzled her. Mrs. Bertie Warrington darted a glance of displeasure at Olive's rosebuds. They were not in the bond. She herself had none, and she saw that she had thus missed a grace which might have been added to her. She was arranging about twenty varieties of photographs of herself in semi-concealed packets ready for the crowd which would madly rush to buy them. The ten beauties who had come to help her saw this, and thought her a "vain thing," and all found themselves secretly hoping that not a single soul would wish for one portrait. They, being lesser lights, and not having attained to the honor of figuring in shop windows between bishops and actresses or any of the savages with whom our country may happen to be fighting, had no claim to imagine that their photographs might be required of them, and could bring

none. Not that these thoughts passed through Olive's mind: she was too new to the whole thing for that, and did not even know that she was there as a beauty. She thought ready wits and an active pair of hands would be all that could be demanded of her. The stall was a perfect jumble of Chinese and Japanese things, Turkish embroideries, crewel work, cabinets, cushions, baskets from barbarous countries, and all the numberless articles for which money can be obtained. People might laugh at Mrs. Bertie Warrington and her inferior planets, but her idea proved itself to be a good one, and her stall was beset with a crowd which never diminished. It was a crowd composed of lordly materials, and loudly beat Mrs. Warrington's heart when the band struck up "God save the Queen." She was not disappointed. Her stall was the first which was visited by royalty, and just as she was selling a paper-knife to the Prince of Wales, on which her own fair fingers had engraved some lovely flowering grasses, a gentleman said to Olive, "I have got Mrs. Warrington's photograph, and I hope you will allow me to have yours also."

"Mine!" she exclaimed, blushing deeply.

"Yes, please. The day will be very inadequately recalled to me by the portrait I have got. I must have yours too."

"Oh no," said Olive; but a hand was laid on her arm. It was that of Mrs. Raymond, who happened to be near and had heard.

"Of course you must let Mr. Ardrossan have your photograph, dear. That is a thing which is constantly done at bazaars."

"But I have none here."

"I'll send for a packet; I know you have a quantity at home—they will be here in half an hour."

Mrs. Raymond dispatched a messenger with a note to Lady Brooke's maid.

"Then, I'll return in half an hour," Mr. Ardrossan had said, but he had not left the corner where he was standing. It was really very amusing to watch the ways of the place.

Mrs. Bertie Warrington sold photographs of herself for any price obtainable, from ten shillings to five guineas, and chatted away regardless of sense to all comers, merrily laughing as she huddled up crisp bank-notes or dropped chinking coins into a tall, narrow china jar which had been hopelessly cracked on its way to the scene of action, and which she had forthwith converted into her till. It had the good property of being so narrow-necked that she could not put her hand into it to produce change; she gave none, therefore; and all her green maidens were as busy and nearly as extortionate as herself. So rapid was the disappearance of the wares, that the stall constantly needed re-arrangement. When Olive's photographs came, Mrs. Bertie Warrington's cup of happiness was somewhat dashed, for she saw Mr. Ardrossan give her a five-pound note in exchange for one, and that was as much as she had ever received for her own; but one photograph well sold will not make a reigning beauty, nor yet having to write your name on the back of it, as Olive was doing now.

"There, Olive, is the whole packet for you," said Mrs. Raymond, giving her the spoil of the Kensington Square photograph-drawer. "Sell as many of them as you can; but you can't expect many people to give as much as Mr. Ardrossan—he is a millionaire, you see."

"No one else will want one," said Olive much ashamed, and she thrust the packet into a corner out of sight. But she was wrong. Mr. Willoughby, who had seen this transaction from afar, came and urgently begged for one, and Mr. Ambergreen and others did the same. "Well, I suppose it is a good thing for the charity," thought Olive, as she dropped guinea after guinea into Mrs. Bertie Warrington's all-absorbing till; but when buyers appeared and asked for the roses in her hat, to wear as "button-holes," she was reduced to fly to her chief for advice. "Want to buy your roses?" said that lady, who was in a great hurry, as well as rather cross with Olive's success: "well, sell them. We come here to sell things, you know; and besides, if you get rid of them, it will make you like the rest of the party, which you are not now."

[illegible]

Sir John Edwards was in the hall. He had seen the
 sell the first one which is the worst. He had seen the
 crowd was so great that he came into the hall. He
 felt lonely sometimes with him. He had seen the first one
 like the second before him. He had seen the first one
 taking a lesson in making the same thing. He had
 themselves with him. He had seen the first one
 and offering them with a copy of the first one. He had
 her a high chair. He had seen the first one. He had
 his way across the hall. He had seen the first one. He had
 ment to be in the hall. He had seen the first one. He had
 of a white Japanese design. He had seen the first one. He had
 was looking at the first one. He had seen the first one. He had
 which looked at a different time. He had seen the first one. He had
 and was rather surprised to find it. He had seen the first one. He had
 work," he said. He had seen the first one. He had
 of buying it. He had seen the first one. He had
 your work. Mrs. Edwards said he.

"On the 12th night," was the answer. "I was in the
there was of mine in 1880."

"Of course," said the man, "I am not a doctor."

did; and you sold all the roses I brought you also! You need not have done that."

"But I made five pounds by them," cried Olive. "I did not want to part with the roses, but I could not refuse such a large sum of money as that."

"I would rather have given you twenty than have you sell them. You made five pounds, and now five fools are walking about the garden outside there with yellow roses in their button-holes and telling people that they were in your bonnet a quarter of an hour ago! Besides, I gave them to you," said he ruefully.

"I have ever so many more at home," said Olive kindly, but in haste to be done with this: "I won't sell them. Sir John, you must not make me talk now; I must mind my work; people want to buy things!" "It is five guineas," said she to a lady with a bit of Turkish embroidery in her hand. "Thank you," she added, as the misguided person placed the sum in her hand, and then she wondered how it was that she so much enjoyed the chink of money which was not going to be hers.

"You will not even let me buy a bit of work which is not your doing," exclaimed Sir John in an angry voice, and he threw the anti-macassar down and left her. Olive was too busy to be able to spend any time in thinking how ill-tempered Sir John was. All her companions were equally busy; all, with bright eyes and flushed cheeks, were making haste to do their task well. Mrs. Bertie Warrington herself was the busiest of all. Her stock of photographs was diminished, her stall shorn of much of its splendor. Many of the buyers had taken their purchases away with them, and most of the things left displayed large white tickets with the names of their new owners. It was growing late in the afternoon, and there would be no time to have the honor of clearing another stall, but, perhaps, enough for a hurried inspection of the other tents and a brief enjoyment of the want of success of their occupants. No one had sold so much as she had. Her triumph was complete—complete in every way; for though some of the girls who had helped her had been very much admired, that

was no more than she had intended, and she was still without a rival. She huddled away the two or three things which refused to quit her possession, and then said, "Ladies, I thank you cordially for the great help you have given me; I fancy that, when the sums gained are added up, it will be found that we have done splendidly! Let us count for ourselves." First she spread out a Turkish table-cover, and then she cried for help to break the jar which held her gains. A brisk blow with a walking-stick reduced it to fragments, and the work of counting began. It was a goodly sum, and Mrs. Bertie Warrington's heart swelled with joy, and she and each weary beauty in her train felt, as she threw herself back in her carriage to go home, that this had been a day of unalloyed triumph.

CHAPTER XIV.

Hear my soul speak.
The very instant that I saw you, did
My heart fly to your service.—*Tempest*.

MRS. RAYMOND was taking Olive home from the bazaar, when she suddenly remembered that Lady Brooke had promised to call for her. "Never mind," said she; "we are now almost at Kensington Square; some one will tell her that you left with me. Get a little rest if you can. How tired you will be for the Academy Soirée!"

Olive was not exactly tired; the excitement of the day still supported her. Lady Brooke had not returned. Olive ran upstairs to dress for the evening. After a while a servant came to tell her that Sir John Ellerton was in the drawing-room. She did not feel as if she wanted to see him, but, as her mother had not returned, was obliged to go to him as soon as possible. He was standing at one of the front windows looking at the convent opposite, and thinking it a much better place for young and pretty girls than that which he had just quitted, when Olive, beautiful in pale-yellow silk, entered the room.

"I have missed my mother," said she; "I ought to have waited for her, but forgot, and came home with my Aunt Raymond."

"A day such as this has been to you no doubt causes a great deal of forgetfulness," said he rather bitterly, and he could scarcely tear his eyes away from the convent to bestow a glance on her. Olive thought him very disagreeable, and did not see that she was bound to speak again. She wondered why he had come.

"I suppose Lady Brooke will not be long," said he presently. "She invited me to dine here and go to the soirée with her—that is why I am here now."

Olive bowed. If he did not see the bow, that was not her fault. He sighed heavily. Then she remembered the roses, and how hurt he had been about her parting with them. She felt rather penitent, and looked round the room for the remainder of his bouquet. She went to the table where it was, added a few touches to the arrangement which had been made by the servant during her absence, and then she showed Sir John how pretty it looked; but all he said was, "It is a great pity that you had not the whole lot of those roses at the bazaar with you."

"I told you I was sorry I had sold those I had," said she;—"that it was not quite my doing—"

"You might have made at least thirty pounds if you had had these too," he added.

Olive felt that she had heard enough about these roses, and really she had been stimulated to sell them quite as much by Mrs. Bertie Warrington's spiteful remark as by any desire to make money. Besides, she had already apologized to him. She put the glass down and retreated to a distant window, and then he saw that she was angry. He was angry too—and yet he wished to set this straight; but he was afraid to speak to her, lest, in his present state of irritation, he should say something which would make things worse. So he stood looking out of the front drawing-room window, and she out of the back. After about ten minutes of this, Sir John approached Olive's window and said, "Lady Brooke does not seem to be coming."

"No; I wish she would, for your sake as well as mine."

He came a step nearer, but suddenly stopped short and said, "May I write a note here? You will excuse me, I am sure—you don't seem inclined to talk."

"I am willing to talk about everything but yellow roses—I said I was sorry I had sold them, and still you reproach me."

He began to speak, said something in an excited manner which Olive did not hear, and then went to the writing-table and took pen, ink, and paper, but was slow to do more. He sat for some time, pen in hand, looking at Olive, who thought it very stupid of him not to be able to get on with his note at once. At last he made a dash at the paper, and then it was soon covered. He folded it with a firm touch, put it in an envelope with an air of extreme decision, addressed it after another long look at Olive, and just as he had done that, Lady Brooke's maid came to say that her mistress had come home, and was dressing with all speed. The dinner was rather dull; all were tired or out of spirits.

The *soirée* was as pretty and interesting as it always is, but Olive was much too tired to enjoy it thoroughly. To her the pictures were little more than an unrestful background to a splendidly dressed and perpetually moving crowd. The brilliant lights and shifting colors confused her, the portraits on the walls blended strangely with the people who came to see them, and the picture of the scene which she carried away in her mind's eye was little else than a kaleidoscopic jumble made up of sheeny silks which flashed strange lights, of sparkling jewels, blue ribbons and stars, and gay uniforms which even an inch of dust could not tone down to sobriety. Mr. Willoughby was there, and looked sulkily mindful of Olive's bad behavior to him. If he had approached her, she would, in spite of her mother's injunctions, have done her best to efface the unpleasant impression it must have made on him, but he did not give her the opportunity. Mr. Ardrossan was there, and bowed very low when he saw

Olive; but Sir John, who followed her like a shadow, seemed to bar his approach and the crowd separated them. Very few pictures printed themselves on Olive's mind. The picture of the year was the interior of Blue-Beard's conservatory of departed wives, and most of the beauties of the day—Mrs. Bertie Warrington amongst the number—were depicted hanging to large hooks by their back hair. Some connoisseurs, however, gave the palm to "Allerleirauh," whose mantle was most exquisitely painted. A long quotation from Grimm explained the motive of the picture. Allerleirauh was a beautiful princess who, in order to postpone her marriage *sine die*, insisted that the fur and feathers of a thousand different species of beasts and birds should be gathered together and worked into a mantle for her. The thousand different textures of the garment were rendered with most admirable fidelity, and there was a constant buzz of delighted amazement before this picture.

Olive's eyes strayed away from these garish glories to a smaller picture which was placed just above. A bit of blue sky and an ash-bough drooping down to a river bed with quiet gray stones in it, made her wish that the peacock's eyes of this mythical lady's mantle were not so bright, or the red of her hair not so pronounced; for, whether this landscape was well or ill painted, she felt a pleasure in looking at it. The artist had done his best to realize a scene like ever so many that she remembered, with little thought, perhaps, of the fantastic juxtaposition which his work was destined to suffer.

A block occurred. One or two vigorous technicalities which met her ear showed that the crowd was not entirely composed of non-workers or of sympathetic amateurs; and if she had been at all acquainted with the language of the studio, she might have gathered what some of the painter's brethren, at all events, thought of the picture which interested her.

"He's got a deal of good stuff into that picture," said a gentleman with a long waving brown beard.

"H'm! Far too much!" muttered another. "He was

at it down there last autumn. He wants breadth sadly, to my mind."

"I saw him there too," said a third; "I told him at the time he was getting it as tight as a drum!"

"Tight!" exclaimed a fourth. "No, the brush-work's good enough. Mind, that foxy thing below plays the very mischief with its tone. It will look all right when it comes out. Has old Gregson got it?"

"No, he has bought those herring-boats. He said he was short of marines."

"Ardrossan is turning a very good buyer, but he is using up his wall-space far too fast." The speaker turned round, and encountered Mr. Ardrossan's fixed gaze. He had come to look at Olive's picture. Faintly disconcerted, the artist and his friends moved away; and just as Mr. Ardrossan was saying a few words to Olive, and she was waiting for an opportunity to ask him some questions about the landscape she liked so much, Sir John Ellerton came up and broke off the conversation by saying, "Miss Brooke, I am sent by Lady Brooke: she is in the supper-room, and wishes you to join her. Will you take my arm?"

Olive was very sorry he had not waited five minutes longer. She wished Mr. Ardrossan had been the one to offer his arm. Sir John was never much of a companion, and to-night he was duller than usual.

The first thing which met Olive's sight when she returned home from Burlington House was a note from Sir John to herself, lying on the hall table with the other letters. He had laid it there as he went out. She felt vexed when she saw it; she did not care for him enough to enjoy a quarrel with him, and this, no doubt, was a continuation of the great yellow-rose dispute, or perhaps apologies for what had already occurred.

"For you, Olive," said Lady Brooke suspiciously, as they went upstairs together.

"Yes, for me, but I am sure I don't want it. What can he have to write about? he only left us twenty minutes since, and dreadfully tiresome he has been!" Olive

opened the note listlessly, but soon uttered a cry of surprise—it was an offer of marriage as well as an apology. “What a nuisance!” she cried, as she tossed it across the table to Lady Brooke. “How can he be so stupid?”

“My dear child,” cried Lady Brooke warmly, “with all my heart I congratulate you on having won the love of a very good and honorable man! I have seen this coming for some time, and it has made me very happy.”

Olive looked rueful. “What am I to do about it?”

“Oh, nothing to-night, of course. You have had a long, tiring day; don’t let this prevent your sleeping.”

“But it will. I shall be thinking all night long how to say no civilly.”

“Say no!” cried Lady Brooke; “I never heard of such folly! How could you say no?”

“I do not want to say yes.”

“Do you not love him?”

“Love him!—of course not!”

“You don’t dislike him?”

“By no means—I am indifferent—I have no particular feeling of any kind about him, except when he is as disagreeable as he was to-day.”

“Ah I see,” said Lady Brooke. “He has been too precipitate—that’s all. For no girl in her senses could be indifferent to what he offers you. Think what he offers you, and what a kind, rich husband he would be! You would spend your life in perfect happiness.”

“But I am quite happy now without him.”

“I dare say you are—most people would be so—but how long do you expect your present life to last? A very short time, I should say, if you look on things properly. Let me advise you not to count on much more of it; but we won’t talk of that now: the thing to settle is what kind of an answer to give to Sir John. I think, myself, that he has been in too great a hurry: but I dare say your little quarrel to-day is partly to blame for that. Answer a few questions, Olive—you have no invincible dislike to him?”

“Certainly not. As a mere friend I rather like him, but that is all. I know I shall never do more.”

"How can you tell?"

"I am certain I shall not."

"Then, I am certain you will like him a great deal more—quite certain; and, at any rate, there can be no harm in trying."

"What is the use of trying? I know I never shall."

"Olive, I must know better than you. It would be very wrong not to try. Let me answer Sir John. Let me tell him that he has been too precipitate—that you have no feeling with regard to him which would permit you to accept him now. Let me beg him to continue on his old footing of friendliness, and not to say another word about this until I give him a hint that he may. You yourself can tell me when I may do that."

"And if I never tell you to give him this hint, nothing more will be said?" exclaimed Olive, who felt that, if the matter could be thus arranged, she was slipping very agreeably out of a disagreeable situation.

"Exactly," replied Lady Brooke. "But, Olive, you must marry some one, and I do not see how you could find any one half so good and kind and handsome as poor Sir John. And now go to bed. It is two o'clock; you had better have a long rest in the morning. If you are up in time for Mrs. Beauchamp's luncheon, that is quite enough: that you must be."

"You must marry some one," repeated Olive to herself, as she went upstairs. "I wonder whether that is true. How odd it sounds!" Well, even if it were certain that she must marry some one, she did not believe she should ever marry Sir John; but she was too utterly weary to care much about that or anything, and fell asleep almost as soon as her head touched the pillow.

Lady Brooke was astir betimes, and off to Lady Ellerton's house in Wilton Place. She saw both mother and son. She told Sir John all that she had said she would tell him, and just a little more; for she allowed him to believe that Olive was, on the whole, very well disposed to his suit, but not prepared to pledge herself for life on so short an acquaintance. "She must see more of you,"

said Lady Brooke. "She must see you more intimately, and get to know how good and kind you are." Lady Brooke had, as usual, a scheme, and was, as usual, entirely successful.

"You think I may hope a little?"

"I think you might hope a great deal, if she knew you better. I must try to arrange to throw you together more unrestrainedly—but I am sure I don't know how to do it. We are never alone in London; or, if such a thing does occur for once, one happy day drives another into the background. Let me see—how difficult every thing is! This is July—the very end of July—my sister, Mrs. Ul-lathorne, will probably return in the autumn, and then we shall have to go to India."

This was the first time Lady Brooke had ever fixed a date for her return, and Sir John had doubtless often heard her talk in a very different strain; but a lover's heart is always open to alarms, and India is so very far away.

"Oh, don't fix any time for your return!" cried he.

"And could you not spend a month or two with us in Scotland?" said Lady Ellerton. "We go down there in ten days—at least, I do, for I am afraid my son will not go unless you do."

This was the very thing Lady Brooke was pining to do. She was for the moment weary of London and its fatigues, and longing for coolness and rest and fresh air. "It would be very nice—delightful! I must ask Olive."

"You seem in as great bondage to Olive as I am to this big boy of mine," exclaimed Lady Ellerton, looking tenderly at her handsome son.

"I think I won't be in bondage," said Lady Brooke. "Tell me when you would like us to come, and I will accept your kind invitation as freely as you give it."

"We go on the 9th: we are forced to be there a day or two before the 12th. We shall be delighted to receive you as soon after the 9th as you can come."

"Oh, but have you a large party?" said Lady Brooke, who sincerely hoped they had.

"Oh no, some few friends are coming, but we will try

to keep our numbers down; we will let the young folks have every opportunity of seeing each other."

"And that is all that is required to make them happy in the way we wish," ejaculated Lady Brooke fervently. "She loves you already as a mother; I know she does."

Olive's scruples were overruled. She said that, "under the circumstances, it would be very disagreeable to be in the same house with Sir John, and be obliged to see so much of him."

"I think it is his mother's house, and I do not see how any one could have a stronger motive to pay a visit than you have now. He is a very kind, nice fellow, and has been extremely good to us. It would be frightfully bad conduct to refuse to pay this visit. He says that he hopes, when you know him better, you will like him more. You can't say, 'I don't want to know you better or like you more,' for a refusal to go to Scotland would be tantamount to saying that."

"But would it be so wrong, when I am certain it is of no use to go?"

Lady Brooke turned round with a light in her eyes which Olive had never seen before. "Of course it would. Olive, I sometimes wonder at you."

"It is not that I don't want to care for him, it is that I can't. If you allow me a choice, I should like to decline this visit."

"I allow you no choice. Of course we go to Scotland. Our visit there does not in any way bind you to accept Sir John. It only amounts to this, that you have sufficient regard for my wishes to go to Invergrudie, and to do your best to see him in a favorable light when there—I insist on your doing that!"

"But then you will make him promise not to be always teasing me to marry him? He is not to say another word about it until I say he may."

"Agreed," said Lady Brooke.

CHAPTER XV.

The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain.—*Hamlet.*

INVERGRUDIE, Sir John Ellerton's shooting-lodge, was two miles from the head of one of the finest lochs on the west coast of Scotland—one which stretched in three long windings for nearly twenty miles from the sea. Olive had caught a glimpse of the loch from the top of the pass through which she was driving, and very spectral and forbidding the mountain ranges, sweeping down to the leaden-colored water, with a straight gray line of cloud cutting off their summits, and a band of fading yellow sky below, had appeared to her. She had never seen a mountain, but had read many fine things about them, and was quite prepared to find them going straight up into the clouds—nay, even leaning over in places; but her first impression, so far, was one of dreariness rather than of sublimity. Lady Brooke may have had the same feeling; for when the carriage stopped at the lodge-gate she exclaimed, "I would rather see the inside of the Ellertons' house than all the tiresome mountains in the world!"

Sir John had heard the sound of wheels; he was waiting for them by the open door. Lady Ellerton received them most warmly, and after their long and tiring journey the prospect of rest seemed delicious. Lady Ellerton took them upstairs, and, having left Lady Brooke in the room which was to be hers, took Olive to one near it—the prettiest in the house, and said, "I have chosen this for you, dear, because I fancied you would like the view from it. You must stay with us three months, and then I hope you will have learnt for yourself what a dear fellow my son is. He is rather shy and reserved, but, when you know him, one of the most warm-hearted and honorable men living! Don't look frightened dear—I shall not say another word on this subject; but you know what is the wish of my heart, as well as his."

"But," said Olive nervously—and tears stood in her eyes as she spoke—"if I find I can't—"

Lady Ellerton kissed her kindly. "Dear child, it will be a great grief to me, but I shall still be the gainer by this visit." Lady Ellerton's pretty courtesies made Olive feel quite happy.

Very eagerly indeed did she draw up the blind of her window next morning and look out. Beyond the garden and a fir-plantation stretched a level plain, with a few humpy hillocks and low bushes here and there, and patches of heather; then came a thin line of intensely blue water, and over this rose a bare mass of mountain, shapeless and herbless, but bright and ruddy with the morning sun, which made every scar and furrow visible. One white fleck of mist was hovering in the ravine between it and its neighbor mountain, which was steeper, and seemed to assume more of the airs of chieftainship. Olive did not at first think much of their height, but gradually she began to make out, on the sides of the further mountain, the red stems of fir-trees; she could trace fine threads of silver among its roughnesses of rock and stone; and the smoke which rose from a rude hovel at the foot of this silver-streaked wall made her feel that the element of size, at all events, was not wanting in the scene. She longed to see more, especially to see round that point which stopped the line of blue water.

For the first fortnight she had more opportunity of improving her acquaintance with Lady Ellerton than with her son. A large party had been asked to Invergrudie before Olive herself had been invited. These were principally gentlemen, and to them Sir John was obliged to devote himself. This did not seem to prevent him from being perfectly happy. He and they gave their whole minds to slaughter, and even when at home their thoughts ran almost entirely in that direction. The truth, however, was that he was not quite so absorbed in the pleasures of sport as he appeared; but he had received so many admonitions as to his behavior to Olive, and had been obliged to give so many promises not even to hint at his

affection for her until he received permission, that he was afraid to approach her even in the presence of others. He liked to think that she was staying in his house, and that he should have the pleasure of seeing her when he went home; but as for talking to her, or doing anything to advance his suit, he dared not; besides, he felt that his dear, kind, quick-witted mother was sure to be working for him in his absence, and would manage everything a thousand times better for him than he could possibly do for himself. Olive seemed supremely happy, and his heart grew light as he saw it. She was never tired of roaming about the garden and grounds.

"You should join her sometimes," said Lady Ellerton.

"I can't. You have forced me to make so many promises, that I feel as if I dared not say anything at all to her. I never seem to have anything to say when I am with her now. If she would let things be settled as we wish, it would be quite different."

"She is very fond of animals," said his mother. "Show her your dogs and horses, and let her see how fond they are of you—that would please her."

Next day, in came Sir John with a very pretty pigeon in his hand—a shy-eyed, bright-necked, fluttering little creature, which cared for no caresses. Olive took it in her hand, but the longing to escape which she saw in the bird's eyes pained her. "It is kind of you to bring this pretty creature to show me," said she, "but it makes it very miserable—may I open the window and let it go?"

"Oh no," cried he, taking it from her and putting it into his pocket again; "I am going to fly my falcon on the terrace; will you come and see it?"

"Yes," was her answer; "but what has the falcon to do with the pigeon?"

"Come and see. It is very pretty to see it strike it."

Olive shuddered. "But you don't deliver over that poor frightened little thing to a great cruel falcon?"

"I must keep the falcon in practice," replied Sir John.

"Tell me what you do."

"Oh no," cried Lady Ellerton, "don't talk about it—

I hate it too ! The pigeon has no chance—I hate all unequal matches. Take it away, John—I wish you would get rid of that falcon."

No more pigeons were brought to Olive, but she knew that they were immolated daily; and she was not fond of men who spent the cream of their lives in shooting, and could not endure Sir John's habit of calling the troops of pretty rabbits which she was constantly surprising, and which tossed up their heels and scampered off at her approach, "nasty vermin." Her ideal of perfect happiness was to dwell in some place like Invergrudie on terms of such close friendship with all living creatures that they should look on her as one of their best friends, and never dream of taking to flight when she surprised them. She wondered much at Sir John and his companions. They were living in the most exquisite scenery—they never so much as thought of it, apart from the shootable creatures which it harbored—mountains, moors, and lochs were simply growing-grounds for birds, beasts, and fishes, which did not flourish without these advantages. They went out early, came home late—so tired, too, that it was just as much as they could sometimes do to keep awake; but of what value was their day's work to any one? What was their aim in life? Olive could discover none beyond a desire to get their time over pleasantly. Politics touched some of them a little; but only in the way of personal hatred of those who thought differently from themselves, for whom no execration was too deep. There were books at Invergrudie; but Sir John had read none of them, and if he lived to a hundred would read nothing but a sporting novel or newspaper. Whatever might be Olive's feeling with regard to Sir John, she was quite in love with his mother. She had admired her in London, but now she learnt to know her thoroughly. It was a daily delight to her to watch the pretty white-haired old lady fulfill the duties of her happy country life with a grace and kindness which added a charm to the most insignificant of them. Olive loved her instinctively, and soon found herself telling all her thoughts to her. She talked to Lady

Ellerton about Austerfield and Aunt Lettice, of her anxiety about her uncle's health, of her dread lest her father might not love her when he saw her, and of every other fear or fancy which agitated her heart. Nothing was kept back from her new friend except such things as related to Sir John, and Olive could even have spoken of him to Lady Ellerton with far more ease than to her own mother. Lady Brooke was thoroughly comfortable at Invergrudie—a trifle dull; but she was worn out by the gayeties of London and really required a rest, and she was enjoying one now which was perfect. She stayed in her own room until midday, and then, wrapped in a deliciously warm white shawl of Lady Ellerton's knitting, she seated herself in some pleasant corner in the garden. When Olive and Lady Ellerton had gone their little rounds of chicken-feeding and conservatory-visiting, they found her there looking soft and purring and velvety. She really looked very pretty; her delicate color was returning, her smooth brown hair lay softly on her temples, she spoke in tender, cooing accents, and seemed to have settled down at Invergrudie for life.

It was many weeks before Sir John ventured to seek Olive's society except as it were by accident. Then he sometimes deserted his friends and joined her in her little walks. "You are not dull here?" he said.

"Oh no, very happy. I never saw mountains till I came here—how splendid they are, and how they grow on one!"

"I never fancied you would be happy in a country place. No one who knew you in London could have imagined you would be. You thought of nothing but balls and parties from early morning till late night."

"I know," said Olive, rather ashamed; "but it was my first season—I should tire of that."

"Nay, I don't quarrel with you for it; one must do something. I am sure I should be very dull in town if I did not go out so much;—just as I should be dull here if I had no shooting;—but you have nothing at all here, and that is why it is so good of you to seem so happy."

"Nothing here! the place is beautiful. I could look at the lights upon those mountains for hours together!"

"Oh, I am so glad! If you like being here—we could always—but I am forgetting—" said he, checking himself by a violent effort—"we are not to talk about *that*."

Olive liked him infinitely better at Invergrudie than she had ever done in London, but she, too, did not want to talk about *that*.

"My mother has been telling me," he continued, "how fond you were of some country place where you stayed when you were a child—a very jolly place with a running stream through some meadows. I wish you would go a little walk with me—we have never had a walk together yet. I want to show you a stream we have here. It is really rather fine, and it's a place you can't see when you are driving."

"I should like very much to see it; but, if we go, won't they wonder where we are?"

"Oh no, they will guess that we are out together, and that, you know, will please them, for they are awfully anxious that we should—oh, I beg your pardon; I am always forgetting! But let me show you the stream—they will know we are all right."

Sir John's blunders were very stupid; but, on the whole, Olive liked him rather better for them.

They left the grounds for their walk. Sir John was equipped for a day's shooting; and, as he led Olive across a rough bit of the moor, she could not help smiling at the contrast there was between herself and her big companion and the Olive and Willie of other days. She was now dressed in a pretty white cambric—not even a crease ruffled its purity—her hat was a white straw with lace and primroses. The Olive of old used to be often rather dirty and dilapidated. She fell into the streams, or tore her frock, or got "over her boot-tops" in the mud. The Olive of the present day was, as her maid would have said, "much more conformable."

It was the very day for a long walk. Her bright eyes brightened with pleasure at all she saw, and her pretty

color grew still prettier. Sir John strode on by her side with rich sunburnt face. There was a look of faint anxiety in his intensely deep-blue eyes.

"I know," said he, "that this river of ours is nothing very particular—not grand in any way, or the kind of thing to make the least bit of fuss about, but still I should like you to see it—you might admire it. Tell me what the river you used to care about so much was like—I hope it was not bigger than ours."

"River!" laughed Olive; "it was not a river at all! it was a common little running stream; but it went zig-zagging about the fields, and sometimes its banks were high, and sometimes they were low, and bits of them fell off and made islands, and you could stand on them, and it had fancies of its own, and at one time it would flow on tolerably quiet in a smooth brown current with something like shooting stars of gold in it, and at another it dashed quite fiercely against the stones that came in its way, and made the prettiest gurgling noises possible."

"Still," pleaded Sir John, "you don't care so much for that stream and that country place where it was, that you could never let yourself be fond of any other?"

"Certainly not! that would be absurd! Of course I could be fond of another, and many others—it is merely a pleasant recollection of a happy time when I was a child; I should have forgotten about the little village where it was long ago, I dare say, if I had been to other country places since; but I have not. I have been from home, of course, but only to horrible sea-side towns with crowded beaches—Rams-gate, and Brighton, and Margate."

"How was Dr. Brooke when you last heard from him?" inquired Sir John.

"Oh, better! he is at home, but he has to be very careful. This illness of his is such a bad thing for him—he will lose his practice if it goes on."

"I have been thinking," said he, "supposing that thing which we are not to talk about takes place—that all goes well, you know," he added nervously, "and you are some day mistress here—let me say it—it is for the sake of say-

ing something about Dr. Brooke—this mountain air is the very best thing for doing good to people who are ill as he is, and he could come here whenever he liked, and go backwards and forwards to his patients sometimes—they would never know when he was away. You would like that, wouldn't you, if it cured him?"

Like that! Olive's love for her uncle was a passion—if coming here would restore his health, she was almost tempted to—she sighed at first, she could not speak—then she remembered that she must not let Sir John indulge false hopes, and said—"Please don't let us talk of that, Sir John."

"Pardon me," said he. "I know I ought not, but I never liked any man more than I liked your uncle when I first saw him." Olive looked at him as he said this, and thought she had never seen an honester and kinder face. They were walking along a wide, rough road across the moor. The heather was bright with purple flowers, the air was light and exhilarating; it made Olive feel so buoyant and happy, that she could readily believe in its power of healing. "What is that break in the grass and heather?" she asked after a while.

"That's the river! That's where we are going. It is a dangerous sort of place—you never know there is a river at all until you are on the bank just above it!"

That was true, but that was not the worst: for when you were on these banks you found that they were deeply undercut, and had a trick of falling. The channel of the river, which was some twenty feet below, was nearly choked up by masses of rock and earth which had fallen. Through these a dark sluggish chocolate-colored stream slowly wound its way, or lay in sullen and malignant-looking pools. Sometimes it was lost to view altogether, and once, when Olive bent forward to try to trace it, she found it was stealing in a deep inky current under the very bit of bank on which she was standing. The bank was undercut and the lower part of it thoroughly worn away by the deadly persistence of the stream. She started back terrified, and could have clung to Sir John for safety. He saw little

cause for alarm. "If we were to fall in!" said she, shuddering.

"It would be all over with us. These pools are tremendously deep, and then the banks are precipitous—no, a fellow would have a mighty poor chance who got in there!"

"But how grand the river is!" cried she. "It is awful to see it stealthily eating at the very life of those rocks; and then in the places where it has got its way and worked them out and made a deep bed for itself, how it swirls round and round, and seems to enjoy itself in horrible, cruel delight!" Olive was fascinated.

"Do you like it?" he asked.

"Like it! Oh no!" cried she. "It is a fine sight, but so awful, I can hardly bear to look—I shall dream of this."

"Then I ought not to have brought you," said Sir John, afraid she would like Invergrudie less now that she knew of this treacherous enemy which lay so near it.

"Oh no, thank you for bringing me—I owe a strange new sensation to you—but do look there!"

"What is it?" cried Sir John, afraid she had become aware of yet another danger.

"Look at those ferns—I'd give anything to get them, but it is quite impossible."

One fern was much the same as another to Sir John, who said, "I dare say you will find lots of them nearer home."

"Oh no, it is a rare kind; I saw a picture of it in Sowerby last night, and thought then how I should like to find it myself."

"I'll get it for you," he cried with great alacrity.

"How? You are not going to try to get across the river. I could not think of allowing you to climb down those rocks for me."

"No one could do that," he replied, smiling at her townish ignorance; "besides, the water is often twenty feet deep! No, I am not going that way. Will you wait here till I run home? I'll soon get you as many plants of it as you like."

Olive thought he was going round some other way. "I'll wait," she said; "but I don't think I dare stay here; I shall be sucked into the river in spite of myself, if I do. It has such a strange fascination."

"No, not here: come with me; I'll put you somewhere where you will be quite out of danger." He was pleased to think that she felt safe while with him—he was very happy. He led her back to the road, and cut down a quantity of heather, with which he made a bright flowery throne for her. "Now promise to sit there till I return, and not to go near the river." That done, he ran off homewards. He was wonderfully quick, and soon disappeared. "Poor fellow!" said Olive, "he does not mind taking a little trouble for me." After some time he returned with a long pole in his hand, but no ferns. "But the ferns!" she exclaimed.

"I have not got them yet."

"I thought you were going across some bridge. I have been expecting every instant to see you on the other side."

"There is no bridge! That's not how I mean to do it."

"Then, you hook them over with that pole," said Olive; "but I can't think how you mean to do it. You may poke them out of the ground with your pole, if it is long enough, but they will all fall into the river when you have done it."

He laughed and said, "Come and see how I get them, but you shall not go near the river's edge." He took her throne in his arms, and put it down at a safe distance; he made her promise not to stir from it during his absence; then he went to the very edge of the bank, fixed his pole on a flat rock in the center of the stream, and with one swinging leap he was high in mid-air, and when he descended he was across the river. Olive had never either seen or dreamed of such a proceeding, but he was safe almost before she could scream. The ferns grew just under the edge of the opposite bank—he soon came back with some.

"Supposing you had swerved, or slipped, and fallen in?" said she, still unreconciled to the danger which he had incurred.

"You would have been sorry for me at any rate," said he tenderly. "But there was not the least danger—I did nothing that was not perfectly easy and safe—don't fancy I did." He helped her to put the ferns in a bundle, and together they went home.

CHAPTER XVI.

Paris. Sweet, above thought, I love thee.

Troilus and Cressida.

IT was the end of October, and Lady Brooke had been at Invergrudie since the middle of August. Ten weeks. She had wished for a change of air, and she had had it—now she was anxious to get back to London; but before she set out on her journey, the last touch must be put to the engagement between Olive and Sir John Ellerton.

"Tell Miss Brooke I want to see her at once," said she to Pearson, her maid. Olive came, not without some trepidation, for this was Monday, and she knew that on Wednesday they were to leave Invergrudie for home. Lady Brooke was seated in a very easy chair, by a very cheerful fire, in her own most comfortable room. Two pretty little feet rested on the fender. She raised her eyes from the fire she delighted in, to Olive's reluctant face, and said, "Olive, I think you will allow that I have fulfilled my part of our contract with great exactness. I have not harassed you with entreaties to like Sir John. I am pleased to see that you do like him much better—I knew you would."

Olive shrugged her shoulders a little. "I do like him better, but I am still very far from feeling as you wish me to feel towards him."

"Nonsense! It is my belief, Olive, that you have very foolish ideas about love and marriage. All that novel-reading which you indulged in when you were a child has filled your head with folly. You expect, I dare say, to be over head and ears in love with the man whom you marry—to think him a hero, and that you would almost lose your

senses if parted from him—but do people go on in that silly way in real life? I am here; I am quite happy, though your father is in India; and I am sure he and I are fond of each other. Lady Ellerton lost her husband three years ago—do you want to be happier than she is? You look for an amount of feeling in such matters that only exists in books.”

This was a most powerful argument with Olive, who had sometimes said the very same thing to herself, and thought it might possibly be true.

“You respect him?”

“Yes, I think I do—he is not exactly a man to make a hero of.”

“Thank God, no!” cried Lady Brooke. “What would become of you if you married a man who was as *tête montée* as yourself?”

“But I want some one who will improve me.”

“Well,” said Lady Brooke coldly, “I do not see why he should not even do that.”

Olive was silent. She was passing all the married couples of her acquaintance in review. She found none whose happiness was the happiness of which she sometimes dreamed. Perhaps she dreamed of what was unattainable.

“Your father has a great wish that this marriage should take place,” said Lady Brooke, returning to the charge.

“You never told me so,” cried Olive, much aggrieved.

“You need not have required to be told that? I’ll read you what he says—I’ll show you his letter, if you like.”

“Please do,” cried Olive eagerly. This was the first letter of her father’s which her mother had ever put into her hand. She read: “If my dear Olive marries Sir John Ellerton, and if he is all that you say he is, her marriage will remove a whole world of pain and anxiety from me. I shall be a happier man than I have been for years. It will be a very good thing for Olive herself, and for her sisters also. You, my dear Honora, will feel happy in leaving Amabel with her,—in fact, it would simplify our course in every way, and is all that I could wish for her.”

Tears ran down Olive's face. Her father wrote very lovingly about her—she was thinking of him, and not of Sir John.

"Well, dear," said Lady Brooke kindly; "you see what he says."

"Why did you not show me this letter sooner?"

"It is about Sir John—I did not wish to urge you about that until the time came—it has come."

"And my father would really be pleased if I accepted Sir John?"

"He would be delighted! you have read his letter."

"And what does he mean about Amabel?"

"She is delicate. If she goes back to India with me, the doctors think it will kill her. I could leave her with you, but I do not know any one else to whom I could intrust her. This air might cure her."

"Is this air so good? Sir John tells me that it would cure Uncle Richard."

"It is the very breath of life to an invalid. Olive, it would be very nice for you to have your uncle a great deal with you, and to see him recover his health—he only wants good air and quiet, and both are to be had in plenty here."

"Still," said Olive, "one can't accept a man because one's relations will be benefited by good air!"

"No, but it goes for something—it is one good thing more, where all is good already. You want a hero out of a novel. I myself think Sir John worth fifty such. He has nearly twenty thousand a year."

"Oh, I don't care about money!" said Olive loftily.

"All girls say that, but they care for what money gives them. You would have everything your heart could desire, and you would be able to help your friends as well. He has this estate here, another in Yorkshire, and a third in Cumberland. Olive, you must be mad to hesitate, and he is so fond of you—I don't see how you can have the heart to think of refusing him. Tell me what it is you dislike in him."

"Nothing except a want of elevation."

"Elevate him, then ! you will have plenty of time and opportunity," said Lady Brooke with a sneer.

"It is not so much that I feel any want in him, as in myself—I do not love him. All the advantages which you have set before me seem tempting and delightful, but should I accept him if he were a poor man ?"

"Of course not ! that would be a very different thing ! In that case, no one would ask you to accept him—no one would wish it."

"Then, I ought not to accept him as it is."

"Nonsense ! You are not called upon to consider what you would have done if he had been a poor man—a poor man would not have offered to a girl in your position of life. We have nothing to do with poor men, and don't want to have. Dear Olive, consider how Sir John loves you—how his mother loves you—how much your father wishes it—what great acts of kindness you could show to those dear to you when once you had wealth in your power—look at life as it is, and forget your silly old novels. You will distress your father most terribly if you miss such a chance of happiness."

Olive sat down to think of all these things. Up to this time she had been standing with her father's letter in her hand. Her heart was very full. She was afraid her mother was right, and that she was ruined by romance-reading. She was turning aside from the course naturally marked out for her happiness, and making a very good, kind man, and every one else who cared for her, unhappy, because of some fancied shortcomings in him. What was she, that she should be so exacting ?

"Your father is not a rich man, Olive," said Lady Brooke: "not for his position, I mean. I can assure you of one thing, and that is, if you will but do as we all wish, you will remove an immense amount of anxiety from his mind. It was miserable to see him sometimes before I came away. I could not bear to look at him."

"What was he so unhappy about?—surely not about money matters?"

"Oh, no, not money matters. Will you take my word

for what I am saying? I don't want to explain things more fully to you now; but if you will accept Sir John, your father will be a changed man."

Olive found these repeated appeals almost insupportable. She rose slowly to her feet, and stood a moment with head thrown back and lips pressed tightly together. Her eyes were troubled, and her heart was full of doubt. "I wish I knew what Uncle Richard would say," cried she in desperate perplexity; "he knows far better what is good for me than any one else."

"He says this," said Lady Brooke, producing a letter from him. "I wrote to ask him what his real opinion was. 'I think you are acting very wisely and kindly in not pressing dear Olive in any way, and in giving her such an excellent opportunity of forming an accurate opinion of Sir J. E.'s character. A residence of so many weeks under the same roof ought to enable her to judge of her feelings. If she can be happy with him, the marriage is all that can be desired by those who have her interests most at heart.'"

"There!" cried her mother. "Now you know what your Uncle Richard says!"

Olive looked at her mother with eyes full of tears. She was being hemmed in to a very narrow circle, but she was resolved to have a little more time to think—and to be alone. "I will go into the garden for one hour," she said, "and then I will come back and tell you what I will do."

Lady Brooke was obliged to turn aside. She was afraid of Olive seeing the gleam of triumph in her eyes. She knew that she had her safe, but she only said, "I trust you to do your best to please us all."

Slowly Olive went to her own room, mechanically she took her hat and cloak, and went to the garden. As she crossed the hall, Sir John was just starting for a great county meeting at the nearest town. "I wish I had not to go," he exclaimed. "It is very hard, when you are leaving us so soon. I don't see the use of going, for I know where my thoughts will be." As he spoke, Olive felt his eyes rest on hers with such intensity of affection

that she could not meet their gaze. Lady Ellerton took her hand in hers, but did not speak, and together they watched him drive away. Then she turned and examined Olive's face very closely, but nothing was to be learnt from it, save that she was very full of thought. She kissed her, and went to some visitors whom she would fain have seen depart. Olive went into the deserted garden, and walked amongst the cold frost-bitten shrubs for some time, and when her hour was over she went to her mother's room, and said, "I will accept him."

Sir John did not come home until nearly eight o'clock, and two friends came back from the meeting with him; but as soon as Olive saw his face, she knew that the good news had been conveyed to him. Lady Ellerton, too, was young and beautiful with happiness. Lady Brooke had evidently taken care that her tidings should run like bush-fire in that one direction.

One of the gentlemen who had returned with Sir John Ellerton was Mr. Ardrossan. He took Olive in to dinner, and must have found her rather deficient in conversation, though by fits and starts she roused herself and talked as best she could.

"It is rather hard that you should be leaving the country just as I am coming," said he. "I have been in Switzerland for six weeks, but I thought I must have a few weeks here as well." Olive knew nothing of Switzerland, but said she thought Scotland magnificent; on which Sir John Ellerton cast his eyes down on his plate and sat looking perfectly happy, and as if he were the scenery which was being praised so much.

"You have seen The Pass of Duich, of course?"

"Yes, we went there when I first came."

"But you did not go on to Glen Duich—my house is there, and the view you get of the Pass from my windows is one of the finest things in the three kingdoms."

"These Scotchmen, my dear," said Lady Ellerton in the drawing-room, "always put their best foot foremost. He thinks that if you go away without seeing the Pass of Duich from his house, the finger of shame will be pointed at you

when you go back to London; now I, on the contrary, am afraid that very few persons in London know that there is such a place. I am glad my John is a nice simple Yorkshireman. However, to-morrow we are to go to Glen Duich, and then you will see Mr. Ardrossan's house and everything that is to be seen there. He is determined we shall go."

"I should like to see his pictures. Is it far?"

"Oh, no, not in fine weather. It is ten miles off, just beyond the Pass. He is staying the night here, and will escort us himself. But do not let us think of him now, Olive," and here the happy old lady let her voice sink to a whisper. "Come to my room after we have all said good night; I must have ten minutes' conversation with you, dear child."

Olive half shivered—she was afraid that Sir John would be there; she thought with deep gratitude of Colonel Douglas and his sisters and Messrs. Ardrossan and Erskine, the visitors whose presence had staved off the evil moment of explanation for so long.

Lady Ellerton's room was a very pretty sitting-room, opening out of her bedroom. A wood fire burned cheerfully in the grate and threw a clear light on the portrait of the late Sir John, beneath which, when Olive entered, young Sir John was standing. She started; Lady Ellerton came forward, kissed her, and said, "Sit down by the fire, Olive dear; I do not seem to have had a single glimpse of you all day. I wish the Douglasses had not happened to be here." Then she added hastily, "By the by, I have quite forgotten to say that we must have breakfast half an hour earlier. We must have daylight to see those pictures."

Olive saw that this was merely an excuse to leave her alone with Sir John, so she put her hand on the bell and said, "Let me ring."

"Oh, no!" cried Lady Ellerton hastily, "don't ring. Hastings is in my room—I'll send her; I want to dismiss her, anyhow." She went into her room, but she shut the door after her. "Oh dear," thought Olive, "that dreadful Sir John will be going down on his knees or some-

thing; I do so wish I had not said that I would accept him." The next moment the nervousness which in very dread of itself, made her indulge in flippant reflections, was all dispersed by one touch of solemn earnest.

"Olive," said Sir John—"I may call you Olive, mayn't I?—Lady Brooke says that you will really do your best to try to love me." There was so much loving humility in his words and manner, that Olive, impulsive as ever, felt prompted to say something to make him happy—to tell him that she did love him, and would heartily endeavor to be a good wife to him; but the bigness of the words was too much for her, and she could only stammer, "I will try. I think you very good and kind to me, and very patient too."

"Patient! good! kind! I would wait for you forever! Only let me love you—only let me see you as I have done these last happy weeks—and you will make me the happiest fellow on earth. Olive, you must trust yourself to me." He took her hand and kissed it—he held it fast in his. Olive felt as if she was mastered by his strong will. She did not dare to put forward any objections—to hint at any shortcomings in her affection.

"I know I am a great stupid fellow, fit for nothing but men's society; I know you think so, and you are right; but, Olive, if I have you with me, I shall improve. I will read whatever you like, and we will travel—you can make me very different, I am sure, only it is not fair to ask you to take such trouble."

Olive could only murmur, "You are better than I am," and she felt that she spoke the truth; but she would be equal to his expectations, and worthy of his trust.

"I believe I loved you the first time I saw you," said he. "You don't know how I tried to get that dear novel-writing aunt of yours in Harley Street to give me an invitation to her house, but she wouldn't. I say, Olive, you know about these things, and I don't, but does she write good novels? I fancy, if she did, she would have had a softer place in her heart for a poor fellow like me who was so fond of you, however stupid she might think him."

"You are not stupid at all," cried Olive, who could not bear to hear him speak so humbly.

"Oh, yes, I am—but no man is stupid who has a clever wife, and when I have got you I shall hold my head as high as any genius living. You shall have all your own way; I am quite content to surrender myself to your management."

"You won't give up shooting?" said Olive interrogatively.

"Well, no," said Sir John in much dismay; "you must leave me that—I'll give up every thing but that."

Shooting was the only thing he did, so Olive could not see that he was making much sacrifice here, but she had no wish to demand any sacrifice at all. "Don't call rabbits vermin, then," said she, smiling. He laughed, and said they should be left to flourish as they chose until the day when she herself came to demand their extinction as a necessity. She laughed also, but she was not by any means in a laughing mood. She knew the solemnity of what she was doing. She felt a certain satisfaction in being so necessary to his happiness, but that was not enough to still the pangs of conscience which told her that something was wanting which ought to have been there. "It is late," said she; "I must go. I wonder where Lady Ellerton is?"

"Call her mother," said he; "she loves you like a mother."

Before many minutes had passed, Lady Ellerton returned. She saw Sir John's happy face—she saw Olive's hand in his. "God bless you both," said she; "I felt all would end well!" She drew a large diamond and emerald ring off her finger and put it into Sir John's hand. He looked at it for a moment, and then with some solemnity placed it on Olive's finger. Lady Ellerton said, "It is yours now, Olive. In our family, that ring goes to the eldest son's wife. As soon as the engagement takes place, it is put on her finger. My dear husband put it on mine just as John is putting it on yours. That ring has been passed on in that way for more than two hundred years.

I have looked at it every day lately as I saw it shining on my finger, and hoped to have the great happiness of taking it off and putting it on yours. That is done now.—God grant that your married life may be as happy as mine was!" Tears shone in Lady Ellerton's eyes. Olive felt choked. Lady Ellerton's words and manner terrified her—everything was so solemn, so in earnest; with that ring on her finger, she felt almost married; and the horror was, that she was not so much in earnest as they were: she was vowing so much and feeling so little; she was flattered by Sir John's devotion, touched by Lady Ellerton's kindness, but how terribly slender was the amount of feeling on her part compared with theirs! She could not bear this any longer—she must go to her own room. "Good night," she said humbly. She was deeply ashamed of herself. Lady Ellerton kissed her. "Good night, dear," said she very simply, but the very simplicity of her manner was another seal to the bond. Olive held out her hand to Sir John—she feared what might happen. Sir John took it, held it for a minute in his, and then said, "Good night." "Nay, John," exclaimed Lady Ellerton, "kiss her, she is your own." On this Sir John bent down, kissed her, and whispered fervently, "Good night, my Olive."

Olive did not know how she got to her room. She threw herself down on her knees, and hid her face in the bed, and sobbed and moaned and sobbed again, until at last fatigue overpowered her.

CHAPTER XVII.

Your Gallery

Have we passed through, not without much content
In many singularities.—*Winter's Tale.*

STRANGE to say, Olive awoke next morning feeling much less miserable. The night had brought comfort to her. Either she had suffered so much before she fell asleep that for the present she could feel no more, or

her ideas had in some degree arranged themselves during sleep. However that might be, the prominent feeling in her mind now was that she was doing no wrong. She had not sought Sir John's love—when it was first offered her, her impulse had been to decline it. She had much disliked accepting the Ellertons' invitation to Scotland—she had felt at the time that she would be placed in a very disagreeable position if she went to stay in his house—her mother had left her no choice—what had happened was no fault of hers. Moreover, it was not as if she were not going to do her very best to love him as she ought. She firmly intended to do that. Her mother said that if she tried she was certain to succeed. Every one said the same thing—she only hoped they were right. She lay in bed looking at the splendid ring which she had not removed from her finger. She wondered whether all the eldest sons' wives had been truly in love when first they felt that ring on their fingers. Perhaps some of these poor girls, whose day of life was now past and gone, had in the first instance felt much the same towards their Sir Johns as she was now feeling towards hers, but custom, and common interests, and slow-growing esteem had made them happy in their choice. What was being in love? Perhaps people were not intended to analyze their feelings so narrowly—and yet she found herself doing this every moment. While plaiting her hair, she put her hand back rapidly and felt the weight of her engaged ring.

"Ah," thought she, "if I really loved him, how I should like to be reminded of him by feeling the weight of his ring thus at every movement! As it is—but I am sure to love him some time, mother says, and he is kind and good."

It was a splendid late October morning. A hard frost of many days' standing had sealed all the small streams to silence. The sun made a thousand glittering points of light wherever its rays fell. Such a day lightens the heart. Such a glance as Sir John gave Olive ought to lighten it also. He saw her pale face, and pitied her: she had evidently not slept. He tried to throw a world of en-

couragement and affection into the brief greeting which society permitted them. She smiled at him faintly but hopefully, and hastened to her seat, for all the guests had taken their places at table some time before she entered. None guessed that so considerable a part of the drama of the lives of two of their number had been enacted since last they sat at table together. Olive and Sir John were expected to be as easy and indifferent as all the rest were.

Lady Ellerton, who charitably believed Lady Brooke's assertion that she was a great invalid, had paid her a hurried visit in her bedroom that morning before breakfast. She wished to tell her how very happy both she and her son were, for the old lady loved Olive dearly.

"Announce the engagement at once," said Lady Brooke. "That is what I advise you to do. Tell the Douglasses and the rest of the people—not in public, of course, but as a secret."

"It would not be a secret long."

"That's the very thing! When a shy girl like Olive promises to marry, nothing hardens her so much in her resolution as to find every one knows of it."

"Oh no," said Lady Ellerton; "this is only the first day—it would be cruel—it must not be done."

"As you think best, but I am sure I am giving you good advice."

"You say you won't go to Glen Duich?" said Lady Ellerton, after again protesting against sudden publicity.

"No, thank you. I must rest for the journey—we shall be traveling to-morrow from early morning till late evening."

Lady Brooke was quite equal to the fatigue, but did not care to drive ten miles to Glen Duich on a cold day, and ten miles back, to see a few pictures, just because Mr. Ardrossan had chosen them as good, when a shilling would open the door of any exhibition in London to her when she was there—as, thank heaven, she would soon be. She had done her duty nobly. She had endured dull Sir John and his yet duller mother for nearly three months in the

interest of Olive; and now that heavy bit of work had been carried to a successful conclusion, and she was free to go back to town and enjoy herself.

They started for Glen Duich almost directly after breakfast. Lady Ellerton, the two Douglasses, and Olive drove; the five gentlemen went on horseback. The horses' hoofs rang merrily on the hard road, and the party in the carriage looked supremely comfortable. Sealskin jackets and caps, big scarlet-lined fur rugs, a hot-water tin, and every contrivance possible, prevented all chance of cold. Olive looked beautiful, and Sir John Ellerton was not the only one who thought so. There was not much opportunity for more than an occasional speech between those who drove and those who rode; but Olive sat with her back to the horses, and those who followed could see her. She wore a pretty, dark-green dress trimmed with rich, dark fur which suited her to perfection. Madame Filoselle had been commissioned to make it for her on the very first appearance of cold weather. Her hat was of the same material, and beneath this Sir John could see the face he loved so much. His heart failed him when she looked thoughtful—for the most part, the beauty and strangeness of all she saw kept her bright and interested. The snow, which lay in thick patches and here and there in broad shining fields on the highest shoulder of the mountain which she now knew so well, had scattered itself on the line of crags below in every variety of pattern, and every shade of perfect gray or russet or tawny gold—for black rock and brown heather and orange-colored fern were subdued, not conquered by it, and many a dark precipice looking down on its own snow-filled hollow stood out with a bolder relief than had ever met her eyes before. The birch-trees were all quite still, and made the blue of the sky dark with the brightness of their leaves—leaves with the latest brand of autumn on them.

"Suppose a heavy snow-storm came on, and we were imprisoned here? Such things do happen in Scotland sometimes, Mr. Ardrossan," said one of the Douglasses.

"Yes, but I hope nothing of that kind will occur until

you are all safe at Glen Duich—then I don't care if it snows for six months."

Sir John Ellerton looked up; the keeper had that very morning predicted a snow-storm; but no one had believed him, and there seemed at present no danger of his prediction being verified.

Mr. Ardrossan's house was large, well-built, and thoroughly comfortable. It stood under the shelter of a great pine wood, and from the windows was seen the Pass through which they had just come. "You must all be cold and hungry," said Mr. Ardrossan to the people who had risen from a most luxurious Highland breakfast to drive wrapped in furs, in a most comfortable carriage, or mounted on good horses to canter over a good road. What could they know of cold or hunger? They did not repudiate the charge. They were rather cold and a little hungry; they thought it must be the sharp mountain air.

"Luncheon will be on the table directly," said Mr. Ardrossan; "you must be very lenient to the manifold discomforts you will encounter in a poor bachelor's house."

"But the pictures, Mr. Ardrossan?" cried Lady Ellerton; "our minds are to be fed as well as our bodies."

"Not till after luncheon—one requires strength even to enjoy pictures."

"We will see those which are here, at any rate," exclaimed Miss Douglass. They were in the library—a very comfortable room with books all round it except on one side—the wall, which was good for pictures, was reserved for them. Three or four very fine ones were hanging, and amongst these one gap occurred. "Ah!" said Mr. Ardrossan disconsolately, "that's because I lent my Old Chrome to the Burlington House people. It is a great nuisance! My room is miserable to me without it! The President came himself to ask me for it, and there's no resisting him! I wish I had, though—I ought not to have allowed myself to be talked over; I shall have nothing but vexation about it, I am sure. The principal thing these exhibitions do is to give a pack of critics an opportunity of proving

to you that all your best pictures are forgeries—but they may say what they like—I don't care!"

"Critics seem to be very vexatious people," observed Olive; "my aunt, who writes, is always complaining of them."

"Ah, these gatekeepers of art and literature are like turnpikemen, rather soured—they have to stand in wet and cold and see people drive past in carriages which they themselves have no power to enter."

"But what if the picture were really a forgery?" said Olive; "I think I should be glad to have it found out, if it were mine."

"And have a joy the less for the sake of truth and a wrench to one's feelings besides? One might almost be allowed to cling to an illusion in such a case. Don't you think so, Miss Brooke?"

"Oh, don't ask me!—I never knew what it was to be so fond of a picture; but why do people have critics? The poets revenge themselves tremendously on the critics when they get the chance."

"You will be on the poets' side," said Mr. Ardrossan. "I am sure you were very sorry to give up your belief in fairies—if you have given it up, that is?"

"Given it up! Not at all: kelpies and brownies and pixies I shall believe in always. There are some such awful black places—caverns and whirlpools—in the stream above Invergrudie! They frighten me with the felt presence of such beings."

"I know the stream. It is ghostly, but salmon-fishing has taken off the edge of some of its terrors for me. A true artist could never lose his sense of them. I'll show you a picture of a stream which is only pretty—and is yet most precious from the painter's deep feeling of the spiritual beauty of the scene. It is in the drawing-room. We will see it afterwards. But you are looking at my untidy writing-table, Miss Brooke. Would you not like Mrs. Barbauld's prosaic little fairy to come and bring that to order?"

"It does look as if that praiseworthy little person might

find something to do. What a cheat that story was! I was so vexed when I read it."

"I must defend my table! It is quite tidy in reality—everything is arranged so that I can find it in a moment."

"And is all you want to write as ready?" asked Olive.

He smiled gravely, and put his finger on a very much tormented page of manuscript. "I am trying to find my way through a difficult subject. I want to make people see that the old-fashioned virtue called faith is worth preserving. I have no pleasure in looking forward to the world's possible progress, however splendid it may be, if we are to give up that."

"Faith has been rather a hard-worked virtue," interposed Colonel Douglas, and Olive saw that her little talk was over, for the others, who had all been admiring a beautiful Persian cat, now came and joined them.

"There is a great deal more work for faith to do yet," rejoined Mr. Ardrossan, leading them away from his writing-table to the pictures.

Two bright-eyed, handsome boys came into the dining-room just as they were all sitting down to luncheon. Mr. Ardrossan introduced them, and tried to make them take a part in the conversation. Afterwards Olive learnt that these were the sons of a Vaudois pastor, a poor man with a very large family, and that Mr. Ardrossan had brought them home with him to educate; he had already trained several boys in the same way. Mr. Ardrossan's character presented some strange contrasts. He was a Puritan and of the very strictest sect of Puritans, and at the same time he had a perfectly pagan enjoyment of art. He would defend the Westminster Confession of Faith against all comers, and then turn to a Turner drawing or a Greek coin, and dwell on it with a rapture which seemed to show that it supplied every need of his soul. In the dining-room where they were sitting, there were half a dozen pictures. "I have my chair placed on a different side of the table every day of my life," said he, "that I may feast my eyes with a change every time I am in the room—that's why I have pictures on each wall. It is the turn of the Rossetti to-

day. "Don't say you like it," he exclaimed, trembling lest any one should rush into a distressing burst of admiration. "Just look at it carefully, and see how it grows on you."

It was Dante and the dead Beatrice. She was lying on a bier, and reverently kneeling by its side was the worn but noble figure of the poet. The mystic colors of the curtain of the Jewish tabernacle were flung on her breast by a reflection from a painted window behind her; the sun was sinking fast, and all was solemn and still. Her face was most beautiful, and every detail of the picture nobly felt and rendered. Olive had never seen any picture she liked so much, and after some time she said so, and wondered why it was so impressive.

"It represents the strongest feeling of a strong man's entire life. Morrison never tired of looking at that picture when he was here; he said it was the subject which took his fancy, and I believe, from what he told me, that it had some special attraction for him; but still, in reality, I think it was the picture which he cared for most."

"Morrison!" Olive started. Sir John was sitting next her and was saying something about skating, but, though she made some answer to him which was sufficient for purposes of conversation, she was listening most intently to Mr. Ardrossan; who was now answering a remark of Mr. Erskine's: "He is a young man, but I have great faith in him. I have a picture of his I bought out of last Academy Exhibition; just a north-country stream with some trees, but with such magnificently painted water and reflections. By the by, Miss Brooke, it is the very picture I promised to show you a minute ago."

Olive was overwhelmed by a strange thought. Why should this Mr. Morrison have any special feeling about the story of Dante and Beatrice? Dante had fallen in love with Beatrice when she was a little girl of eight. She sat turning this thought over in her mind, when suddenly, for the first time, she seemed to hear what Mr. Ardrossan had just said, and exclaimed, "Were there trees in your picture—ash-trees?" She asked this because, by an odd freak, her memory abruptly thrust before her sight some-

thing she had never once thought of since the Academy Soirée—the picture she had admired so much and so long, which hung above that bewildering Allerleirauh.

“Yes, ash-trees to the left—but now I remember, I saw you looking at it. I did not buy it of him; I wanted it, but he begged me to buy a Gresley instead; he said Gresley was broken-hearted because he was not selling—that he had a consumptive wife, and could not give her the comforts she ought to have; in short, he put the matter in such a light, that I was not happy until I had bought the Gresley and paid for it.”

“But I hope you liked the Gresley?” said Lady Ellerton.

“Oh, yes, I liked it; he would not have asked me to buy a bad picture; but I liked Morrison’s own picture a great deal better. He gives his whole mind to his work, and has a mind to give—I wanted that picture terribly.”

“But, dear Mr. Ardrossan,” said Lady Ellerton, “why do you ever go without a thing you want? You are very different from poor folks like us—you have only to write a check.”

“I only allow myself a certain sum to spend on pleasure,” said he gravely.

“But you did get this Mr. Morrison’s picture?” cried one of the Douglasses.

“Yes, but not when I wanted it—I had to buy it from a dealer, and he told me what was fine in it, and how ‘Morrison’s’ were sure to rise in the market, and how I had better secure it at that low figure, for Mordew meant to speculate in him next season.” They smiled at his disgust, and asked to be taken to see the picture.

“It is in the drawing-room at present. It came while I was away, and has not been hung yet. Morrison would not let me hang it while he was here—he said he wanted to be happy.”

“I should have thought he might have been very happy to see his work hanging here in such good company,” observed Lady Ellerton.

“He thought it too good! Morrison is never satisfied with his pictures—he can only see their faults.”

The drawing-room was devoted to water-colors, and conspicuously beautiful amongst these was the Turner. It was a view of some town in Switzerland with a river rushing through it and a great lake beyond: there were roofs and watch-towers and many bridges. To those who knew the actual scene, every point in the drawing was verifiable; but the facts of crowded roofs and streets, of far-off snowy mountains and glittering or reflecting water, had been so harmoniously interwoven, and the transfiguring splendor of sunshine so wonderfully thrown over all, that it was hard to think that any earthly city could be so beautiful, or that the painter had not let his thoughts wander to that apocalyptic city whose gates were of pearl, and whose dividing river was no other than the river of life. The drawing was all gold and russet and pale-gleaming blue, and shone with a soft light of its own. Olive was silently delighted. She read her Ruskin, but she did not know Turner's pictures, and had often wondered if there could, by any possibility, be quite so much in them as Mr. Ruskin would have her believe. The Douglasses, Sir John, and his mother, had looked at it and then turned away to admire a sober Dewint. Sir John observed that the Turner "looked very queer!" Such luxury of color as that indulged in by Turner in this drawing is for the most part a stumbling-block to ordinary country gentlemen, who like to see nature depicted in sober grays for high lights, with a few well-put-in black and indigo tints to bring them out.

The Morrison picture was in a corner with its face turned to the wall. "He put it there himself," said Mr. Ardrossan apologetically. "He only left three days ago."

All crowded round this, so Olive stole away to a little drawing which was hanging near a distant window, for it reminded her of something she had once seen, she knew not when or where. Suddenly she became aware that this was a sketch of a bit of scenery which she once knew by heart. It was the lime-tree at Austerfield under which she and Willie used to meet. There was the gnarled old root on which they always sat. The field was a hilly one, and

sloped away down to the stream—the little stream by whose banks they had played so happily. It all looked very small, but every feature of the place was accurately given; beyond was the wood.

"Pretty little sketch, isn't it?" observed Sir John.

Olive's eyes were full of tears—tears for the happy old long-forgotten time. "Yes, it is pretty," said she, and to hide her eyes she stooped to look at the back of the drawing. It had been exhibited, and was still labeled, "No. 4. Austerfield, Yorkshire. William Keithley Morrison, 17 Chaucer Street, N. W." Olive did not know how he had come by the name of Keithley, but she knew that this was her "Willie," as she used to call him so many years ago; and he had been to Austerfield, and had painted it!

"Olive dear, how very, very silent you are!" said Sir John Ellerton, who was still standing by her.

"I know I am. Don't mind that—I am only thinking. There is so much in this room to make one think."

Some one called Sir John away to look at something else. The next person who spoke to Olive was Mr. Ardrossan, who said, "Ah, you have found the little Morrison! It is fine, isn't it? He is a beautiful artist, and he will do better work yet, for, in addition to art-gifts, he has both a heart and a soul."

"It is getting late," said Lady Ellerton, suddenly checking a conversation which Olive much wished to continue. "Olive, I am sure you have enjoyed this; I know I have. Mr. Ardrossan, I am delighted with your pictures." Olive looked so much in earnest when she turned to thank Mr. Ardrossan, that he smiled, but his smile was a very kind one.

The carriage was soon ready. He offered his arm to conduct Lady Ellerton to it. Sir John lost no time in securing Olive; he felt that some change had come over her, and was uneasy. "Olive dear," said he, "I did not know you cared so much for pictures. We will buy some for ourselves—you shall choose them."

Olive said something that was unintelligible, in which the words "far too kind and good to me" occurred very frequently.

"Are you tired?" he asked.

"Yes, a little; I will rest on the way home."

"Mr. Ardrossan is a very interesting man," observed Lady Ellerton, when they were once more on their way.

"Very. Most interesting," replied Olive, and then she left the burden of conversation to the Douglasses. She shut her eyes and said no more. She heard those in the carriage with her admiring the rising moon; she never opened her eyes. She ran past Sir John and the others, when they reached the warm shelter of home, hurried to her own room, and threw herself on her bed in an agony of tears.

CHAPTER XVIII.

To thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.—*Hamlet*.

"I CAN'T go on with it!" she cried; "I must tell him all! I thought I could bear it, but it is absolutely impossible!" Her sobs redoubled. Every feeling of her heart rose up in opposition to the part she was playing! She, who did not love Sir John, had promised to marry him and to spend her whole life with him as her companion. She felt it disgraceful to have consented to such a thing even for a moment! She had pledged herself to a life from which all that sanctified it would be absent. She was promising to be all in all to Sir John, and had no pleasure in his company—no feeling for him beyond languid toleration of his love for herself and a certain amount of gratitude for his unselfish kindness. How long would that stand the wear and tear of daily life? How many times already during that day had she wished he would get out of her way, and let her hear what Mr. Ardrossan was saying? Mr. Ardrossan's conversation was interesting to her—his character was interesting also; whereas, if she bound herself to live with Sir John Ellerton hourly, daily, she would have to listen to things she did not want to hear

and either grow like him in mere self-defense, or else be perfectly wretched. It seemed terrible to be his betrothed wife and yet to find herself taking more pleasure in half an hour's conversation with a stranger than she had done in the whole course of her acquaintance with him. Mr. Ardrossan was only an ordinarily well-educated, pleasant man; in London, every time she went out, she would meet men as agreeable as he, and thus continually be obliged to make comparisons to Sir John's disadvantage—and she his wife, too! and perfectly aware that this deficiency in him was no new discovery, for she had seen it from the first, and had accepted him with her eyes open! But she could not and would not carry this wicked engagement further! She did not love him—she admired a stranger, to whom she had this day spoken almost for the first time in her life, more than the man to whom she was engaged; and the chance sight of a picture of Austerfield, and mention of a poor little boy of ten years old with whom she used to play these ten years ago, had more power to touch her than the presence of the man she was going to marry!

However she might cloak the matter over, she was perfectly aware that she had accepted Sir John for his money. She had liked the idea of wealth and position, and of being able to have everything which they would command—her recent life in London made her perfectly able to compute these advantages. Lady Brooke knew that she was doing this, and thought it right. She had met Olive's "But I shouldn't accept him if he were a poor man," with the answer, "Of course you would not—no one would wish you to do so." "That was the time when I ought to have stopped short," cried she; "but I let the shameful thing go on—let her tell him I would accept him—let him put his ring on my finger and kiss me—I am a degraded, horrible girl!—I hate myself!—I accepted a man I did not love, just because he was rich, knowing all the time that I should not have a shadow of a doubt about refusing him if he were poor. It shall not go on a moment longer—I'll say at once that I can't do it." She half rose; but the thought of his love for her, and his mother's love, and of

the shameful confession that she would have to make, checked her, and once more she threw herself down to weep. Her mother's maid came to see if she wanted any little help in dressing. She was startled to see the room nearly dark. There was no light but that which came from the fire. Pearson was a person of some authority—she came forward and said, "Miss Brooke, do you know that it only wants ten minutes to dinner?"

"I know—at least, I don't—but I can't help it; I am not going down—I am tired." Olive did so want to keep her grief a secret—for Sir John's sake, if for no other reason.

"I am afraid you are not well, ma'am; the long drive—"

"Yes, that's it. Leave me alone for a while—I shall soon be well."

"But you will have a light?"

"No light, thank you; my head aches."

"But, Miss Brooke, you will stumble over the boxes if you begin to move about in the dark—all your things are packed—all but the one dress I left out for you to wear to-night—I forgot to ask you which one, ma'am, so I put out the white one—and oh dear, Miss Brooke, what a pity! You must have been lying on it."

"I threw myself down in the dark," said Olive: what were white dresses to her! The maid came to remove the dress—she accidentally touched Olive's hand. "You are like a bit of cold ice, miss—and oh dear, what is the matter? Your fur trimmings are as wet as wet!" Olive saw that her tears were no longer a secret—the maid smoothed her pillow, put a warm dressing-gown over her, and said she would inform Lady Brooke that she was not well.

"Don't send mamma to me!" cried Olive. "Go to Lady Ellerton's room—say I am very tired—that I can't go down to dinner, and that I will lie quietly here—but ask her to come and see me before she goes to bed. Please do exactly as I say." Olive had made up her mind to tell Lady Ellerton, and get her to speak to her mother. Lady Brooke did come for a moment, looked at her kindly enough, and said, "You are tired, dear—you are quite right to rest. We shall have a long day to-morrow, I

quite dread it—I'll send you something to eat—Oh, you must eat, whether you are tired or not. All your boxes are packed—so are mine. I shall not be sorry to be back in London. We have had a very nice visit, though."

And thus she fluttered out, as usual, many hundred degrees below the level of what was demanded of her. What a bitter time Olive spent before the arrival of Lady Ellerton! "Your boxes are all packed:" her mother's words lingered in her mind. There was a ray of comfort in them. She would take her shameful, degraded self out of a house where she had rewarded the extremity of kindness by treacherous deceit; but how terrible it would be to tell Lady Ellerton!

An hour or two passed thus. Some one knocked at Olive's door. Lady Brooke entered. Olive had feared and hoped it was Lady Ellerton. "Olive, I hope you are feeling better,—you were terribly missed down-stairs; Sir John looked quite cut up. I reminded him how soon he would be back in London himself, but I could not make him look happy about it. Olive, if you had refused him, I think it would have killed the poor fellow."

Olive groaned. She knew that she ought to tell her mother what she was going to do, but was afraid. After a moment's delay, however, she summoned courage and said, "Mother, I can't let it go on—I don't love him enough."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Lady Brooke. "Every girl feels that when she has accepted a man. I must say good night, Olive. We start at the ridiculous and horrible hour of eight. Oh, here is Lady Ellerton!" Lady Ellerton came, and all chance of further speech with her mother was gone. She pitied Olive, she kissed her—she scolded her for not eating—she consulted a little with Lady Brooke about her, and together the two ladies left the room. Olive dared not say that she wished to see Lady Ellerton alone—she was afraid of her own mother. She got up and began to write. Pearson returned, but Olive sent her away, and though her head ached terribly, she wrote. But she could not write—it was easy enough to call herself bad names, but how could she ever express the sorrow she felt

for the pain she was giving? She walked backwards and forwards for an hour, and then she thought she might venture to go to Lady Ellerton's room—there would now be no fear of finding Sir John there. She crept hurriedly along the corridor; she passed her mother's door; she felt very bitter towards her mother, when she thought how contemptuously she had dismissed a confession which it had cost her so much to begin. Her dear Aunt Selina would have listened with all the sympathy of a kind heart. She tapped at Lady Ellerton's door. "Come in, John," said a pleasant but sleepy voice; and Olive, with her hair hanging low down in disorder, with pale and tear-stained cheeks, turned the handle of the door, but dared not advance beyond the threshold. Lady Ellerton was sitting in her dressing-gown by the fire; she had a book of prayers in her hand, but her reading was all done, and now she was thinking. "Olive! you here! Dear child, what is it? Are you worse? Are you ill?" said she, when poor penitent Olive came near her, looking as broken-down and miserable as could be.

Olive threw herself on the floor at her feet, and hid her face on her knee. A fit of crying relieved her, and she said, "Lady Ellerton, can you listen to me with patience? I have come to say something which will shock you terribly. I am afraid to speak."

"Speak, dear," said Lady Ellerton kindly, but very gravely; her heart misgave her—she seemed to know at once what was coming.

"I have come to you because I am so miserable," said Olive. "I cannot go to bed, or wait another moment without telling you that I have"—here she began to cry again, but she went bravely on—"have behaved very ill to Sir John and you—I have promised more than I can perform. I have said I will be engaged to him and marry him, and I can't—I must not—I ought not, for I do not love him."

Lady Ellerton moved uneasily. Olive was afraid that she was going to thrust her away from her. She seized Lady Ellerton's hand and cried, "Please do not hate me.

I have tried hard to like him. Mamma said I ought, every one said it was wrong of me not to do so, and he looked so anxious that I should, and begged so hard, and he is so good and kind, that I have a very great regard for him. I let myself be persuaded—I thought I could engage myself to him and be happy, and that I was sure to love him properly in the end; but I have been thinking all day, and I am not happy, and I don't think I can be if it goes on—I am afraid I shall never love him more than I do now, and that makes me miserable! I am wretched whatever I do, for, whether I go on with this or break it off, it must be bad for him." Sobs and tears interrupted Olive every moment, but she forced herself to continue. Lady Ellerton had not yet spoken. Olive looked up in her face in an agony of distress and anxiety—it was ashen gray, and so changed. She tried to say something, but could not. She saw the poor girl's terror-stricken and penitent face, and gently laid a hand on hers. "You have done what is right," said she at length.

"But you will never forgive me?" sobbed Olive.

"I should have been much more unhappy if you had accepted him. Under the circumstances, you have done what is right."

"Don't blame me quite so much as I seem to deserve—I have been so hard pressed about this!" "I wish there was no such thing as money," she was going to say, but she remembered that she must not accuse her own mother.

"There has been some great mistake," said Lady Ellerton. "Both my son and I were informed that you did like him very much, but did not quite love him, and that you came here to strengthen your affection for him, before you finally pledged yourself to be his wife—that was what your mamma gave us to understand in London."

Olive started. "Oh, no," she replied. "Mamma would not allow me to refuse his offer at once. Lady Ellerton, do not think it unkind of me to say that that was what I wished to do. Mamma said I was to try to love him, and that coming here to Invergrudie meant

nothing but being willing to try; but I think now that I ought to have known that it meant far more. How can I atone to Sir John? How cruelly, how shamefully he has been treated!"

"It would have been worse if you had been silent, my poor girl—under the circumstances—when I remember all things—ah, Olive, I should have been a very unhappy woman if you had married my son without loving him! It would have been the very worst thing that could have befallen us—thank God, that risk is spared us." She seemed to forget Olive's presence for a minute or two, and to be lost in thought.

Olive was puzzled by her words. "Under what circumstances?" she asked—"what risk?"

"Do not ask me—I can't explain—we must not speak of that. Let us think of poor John."

"Yes, let us think of him," said Olive very humbly. "I am going away in the morning. I hope, when once I am gone, he will not think of me very long."

"Ah, my darling," said Lady Ellerton, "you are one of those whom it is not easy to forget. I shall think of you too, but thank God you have done what is right at last. I don't think John will give you up, though," she added after a pause. "From what I know of him, I think he is almost certain to try for some time to make you change your mind. He will try to see you in London." Olive looked very anxiously in Lady Ellerton's face. "Promise me," said that lady, "not to accept him again out of kindness, or for any other reason but honest liking. If you find hereafter that you can love him, I should rejoice to hear it; but, for God's sake, let us have no more marriages without love." This speech also bewildered Olive, but she dared make no inquiry. "Promise, Olive," repeated the old lady. "Promise solemnly."

She gave the required promise.

"Now, my dear, leave me," said Lady Ellerton sadly. "I must think of what I have to do—I must speak to my son."

"Please ask him not to see me, ask him not to try to

see me in the morning," pleaded Olive. "Tell him how unhappy and ashamed I am when I think of him and of you, and all your kindness; and, Lady Ellerton, do not let him think I have no regard for him at all—please do not."

Lady Ellerton rose wearily—all her joy was turned to bitterness.

"There is another thing," said Olive; "I hardly dare to ask you to do it. Would you tell my mother what has happened—I dare not—dare not do it myself!"

"I will. She and John are talking in the drawing-room—or were, an hour ago. Ah, Olive, how happy we all were last night—just one day, and what a change!" Olive crept sorrowfully away.

CHAPTER XIX.

Who is't can say, I'm at the worst?—*King Lear*.

O, speak no more:

These words like daggers enter in my ears.—*Hamlet*.

"IT'S half past six, Miss Brooke! Breakfast will be on the table in an hour's time."

Olive rubbed her eyes. Much as those eyes had wept they had been sealed in sleep. She rose. Her boxes were standing ready packed for departure in a corner of the room, with the ill-treated white silk dress of the evening before now neatly folded and lying at the top of one of them. She was going to leave Invergrudie; perhaps, when she was many hundreds of miles away, she might shake off some of the weight of remorse by which she was now overborne. She did not wish to be freed from the entire burden; she had done something which ought never to be forgotten. She dressed herself, and then sat down and wrote three or four lines of passionate affection and regret to Lady Ellerton, folded her note carefully, and enclosed the ring Sir John had given her such a short while ago; and now all was over, and she was ready to leave the house in which she had been so kindly entertained.

"Are you nearly ready, Olive?" asked Lady Brooke, half opening the door and peeping in. Olive trembled in every limb. "Oh yes, I see you are; but be sure you make Pearson leave out plenty of wraps for the journey; it is so cold you are certain to want them."

Olive was sitting in a part of the room which did not command a view of the door. She dared not turn and meet her mother's eye, but, happening to look in the direction of a large looking-glass, she caught sight of Lady Brooke, and saw that her own face was being scanned by her mother with the utmost minuteness. The instant Lady Brooke saw that she was observed, she dropped her eyes and said, "You had better come down to breakfast, Olive; there is no time to lose."

"I don't think I can take any; I am not hungry."

"Shall I send it upstairs to you, dear?"

Olive began to think her mother did not know yet. Lady Brooke went away, and soon came a cup of tea and some food for Olive—she swallowed it, though it seemed to choke her. People came and did things to her boxes. She hardly noticed their presence; she did not know how long it was before she was summoned—the carriage was at the door. It was time to go. She held her note to Lady Ellerton tightly in her hand, and went down-stairs. Lady Ellerton was standing in the hall. She looked very pale, and tall, and dignified, and under great restraint, but still kind. Olive came mutely towards her and held out her note.

"Will you read it?" she asked, with humbly downcast eyes.

"Yes, dear," was Lady Ellerton's answer; but as she kissed Olive, she said, "I saw your mother last night: I told her." And now Olive became aware that Sir John was putting Lady Brooke into the carriage. Soon he came to her. "Good-by, Miss Brooke," said he.

Olive did not know how he looked, she dared not raise her eyes to his face. "Sir John," she faltered and burst into tears.

"Don't do that," he said in a low voice. "I will

do my best either to win you or bear to live without you." No more was said; he put her into the carriage by Lady Brooke's side, the door was shut, and they drove away.

For a long time Olive forgot her mother and all fear of her. She gave way to very bitter but silent grief. At last she was conscious of Lady Brooke's presence. That lady, dressed in the warmest of warm traveling-dresses, was sitting looking perfectly composed and comfortable, with eyes turned towards the window. It was a fine morning. The sun, a very wintry one, shone pleasantly enough on the crags, precipices, and bleak mountain sides past which they were making their way; a few fleeting snow-flakes danced about in its light. The nearest railway-station was ten miles off. Had Lady Brooke developed a sudden taste for wild scenery?—her eyes never strayed from the window. The view certainly was magnificent, but somewhat eerie. They were passing through a gorge in the mountain; it was so narrow that there was no room for anything but the road on which they were driving, and deep down below was a ghastly precipice. The ground was rather slippery and sometimes thickly covered with snow, but Olive had no thought of fear; if the carriage did go down with her, it was no more than she deserved. How odd it was that Lady Brooke uttered no reproaches! They at length reached the railway-station, took their places in the train, and Olive watched the Ellerton's carriage as it turned round and slowly drove away—the last slender link between herself and them was now broken. As the carriage finally disappeared behind a high bank, Olive could not help casting a very troubled glance on her mother. Lady Brooke showed no signs of trouble: she was not thinking of that or of anything, but how to make this railway-carriage, in which she was obliged to pass so many hours, as comfortable as she could. Olive watched her pushing hot-water tins about and spreading out warm rugs. She roused herself and lent a helping hand to these manifold arrangements, wondering much as she did so why her mother refrained from speaking of what

had happened, and half wishing she would say her worst and get it over. When all was smoothly spread and warmly placed, Lady Brooke turned to Olive and said, "Well Olive, poor Lady Ellerton made me promise to say nothing to you about what has occurred; and so long as I was in her house, or in her carriage, I have thought it right to keep my word; but now, the sooner I tell you what I think of you the better. I must say that you have contrived to bring our visit to Scotland to a very unpleasant conclusion!"

"I know it! I feel it! You can't blame me more than I blame myself."

"I can't imagine how you could behave so ill. We have stayed ten weeks, or perhaps longer, in these people's house; they have been angels to us, and we have gone away after making them as wretched as it was in our power to do!"

"You know I never wished to come to Scotland!" said Olive, plucking up a spirit; "and you know you said that coming here bound me to nothing—that it was an understood thing that it did not."

"If I did say so, it was only because I thought you were sure to get fond of him; I said it for your good. Your own sense must tell you that to stay ten weeks in a man's house, letting him get more and more attached to you daily, and then turn round and say that you can never love him, is horribly cruel conduct!"

"I think you more to blame than I," cried Olive in desperation. "You know about these things and I do not; my instinct was to stay away from his house, you insisted on my going. Why did you do that?"

"Does it occur to you that you are not quite respectful to your father's wife?" observed that lady.

"What an odd way of putting it!" thought Olive, who was so bitter with Lady Brooke that, for once, she could be critical with regard to her. "Why does she not say mother?"—"Mamma," she said, "I am sorry if I am not respectful to you, but I am so shocked at what has happened! It is terrible! I can't bear to think of it—what shall I do?"

"Honestly speaking, Olive, I don't think you *can* do anything now but take him."

Olive shook her head.

"Then, if you won't take him, what do you mean to do?"

"Nothing!—Let things go on as they were before he wrote to me—oh, how I do wish he never had done so!"

"That is all very fine!" exclaimed Lady Brooke. "I can quite understand that you are perfectly content to return to the life you led last spring—and no wonder; you had as happy a time of it as any girl in London! No girl, no matter what her position or rank may be, could have had much more comfort and enjoyment than you had—but I told you that it was not going to last forever. Pray do me the justice to remember that."

"I know Aunt Ullathorne will want her house."

"That's not all—besides, girls must marry when they can—they have only a certain number of chances: you have had one which is unexceptionable. He is well-born, rich, handsome, fond of you, and good. What do you want more?"

"The fault is in me—I do not love him."

"Whom do you love, then?" cried Lady Brooke, with a sudden flash of consciousness that Olive's answer might supply an excellent reason for what was otherwise entirely inexplicable—that her conduct might, in reality, be all that could be desired.

"No one. How can you ask such a question? I love no one."

Lady Brooke did not quite believe her, and said, "Have you any reason to expect an offer from Mr. Ardrossan?"

Olive blushed to the very tips of her fingers, but it was with fierce burning indignation. "Would that excuse what I have done?" she asked very bitterly.

"Yes, no doubt—at any rate, it would help to make it intelligible."

"Then if it would be right to refuse Sir John for the sake of a richer man, there can certainly be no harm in refusing him because I do not love him."

"Refusing him for the sake of Mr. Ardrossan is a reason—refusing him for no reason at all is the greatest piece of stupidity I ever heard of; but that, it seems, is what you are doing;" and so saying, Lady Brooke coldly and indignantly turned away to look at the snow which was now falling heavily, but she soon turned back to watch Olive. Olive did not speak—she felt it was in vain to try to make her mother understand her motives, and she was weary with the struggle and emotion of the night before. Lady Brooke watched her for some time in silence, and then said with a sneer, "You think you can't make me understand your lofty motives, but you are perhaps mistaken. I perfectly understand that, for no reason whatever worth listening to, you have refused a kind, affectionate husband and a happy home; what I want to understand is, what ideas you have with regard to the future—what do you propose to do? Do you mind telling me?"

"What do you mean?" cried Olive. "Why am I to do anything? I have never thought of that—girls who have a father and mother do not settle what they are going to do—all thinking of that kind is done for them."

"That is undoubtedly a very safe method of looking at things when you have a father and mother; but, Olive, that is not the case with you, I am very sorry to say—you think I am your mother, but I am not!"

While saying this, Lady Brooke did not spare Olive one glance of her pitiless eyes. She stared steadily in her face to see how she bore this most unexpected blow. The suddenness of the thrust stunned her. "Not my mother?" she gasped. "What can you mean?"

But all Lady Brooke said was, "No, I am not your mother." The calmness and indifference of her manner, which to Olive's mind added so appreciably to the cruelty of her conduct, did something towards restoring the poor girl to herself. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered from the shock to think at all, she became aware that she had never loved her so-called mother, and little by little, this piece of intelligence came almost as a relief to her. "At any rate, I have a father," said she, after a painful silence;

"he will say what he wishes me to do, and I will obey him."

"Do you mean that you will accept Sir John if he bids you?"

"Say no more about Sir John," cried Olive in impatient despair—"that is done with! I mean, I will go where my father bids me go, and spend my life as he wishes me to spend it."

"He won't wish to have you with him—that is quite certain," said Lady Brooke, "for he dreads seeing you."

This was too much for Olive: she burst into an agonized fit of crying. "Tell me why," she gasped. "What have I done? Why should he not wish to see me?"

"Because you are the child of a very bad, wicked woman, who behaved so disgracefully that he was obliged to get a divorce from her. Her misconduct nearly killed him—he has never got over it. That is why you have been kept away from him so long—it would be terribly painful to him to see you—he is unhappy enough about you as it is—he dreads how you may turn out; his one great anxiety is to see you safely married."

Clank, clank, went the noisy train, as, with no thought of anything but its own iron self, it hurried on past moor and strath and lonely cottages, and Lady Brooke cut her way through Olive's heart just as ruthlessly. She talked, and perhaps Olive heard—she made no answer—this horrible and cruel disclosure had utterly overwhelmed her. She knew that it was true—it explained Lady Brooke's manner to her, and many other things; looks and speeches, which had often seemed so strange to her, were all intelligible now. "Do the Ellertons know this?" she at length asked very humbly, for Lady Ellerton had said one or two things the night before, which she had not understood at the time, but which she now thought seemed to point to such knowledge.

"Of course they do! Every one knows it. Such things are no secret—they are in all the newspapers—trials always are! People do not come and talk to you about it, but they think of it whenever they see you."

"You ought to have kept me out of sight, then," wailed Olive; "you ought not to have taken me to balls and parties and places where people are. Ah—I remember now, that was what the lady at the Drawing-room meant. Why did you let people see me?"

"That was our kindness to you; don't blame us for that! We did not want to let you be quite crushed by this—we wanted to give you a chance of doing well—of marrying some one of good position who could afford to defy the world, and make you happy."

"Why should the world say anything about me?" cried Olive haughtily. "I have done no harm!"

"Perhaps not; but, rightly or wrongly, the world is very shy of girls whose mothers have been divorced. These things run in the character. You won't find many men so ready to overlook the disadvantages of your birth as poor despised Sir John Ellerton. It was a long time before Lady Ellerton could tolerate the idea of having you for a daughter-in-law, I can assure you!"

How Olive's life was changing! When she left Invergradie she thought herself the most miserable girl in existence, but she was happy then by comparison with what she was now. She sighed very heavily.

"You must make the best of a bad position, Olive; there is nothing else to be done. I think you will now see that you had better change your mind about Sir John: you will never have a better offer—your father was delighted when he heard of it. It seems to lift you out of disgrace at once and forever. Accept him, and then I can bring your sisters home."

"Do you mean to say that you are keeping them away because of me?" cried poor Olive, in renewed distress.

"Yes, it is a disadvantage to them. As long as you are unmarried, the horrible story is raked up and talked about every time your name is mentioned; if you were once married, there would be a chance of people forgetting it."

"Then," said Olive very drearily, "I have, so to speak, no home?"

"Oh, yes, you have! Both your father and I are most anxious to do our duty by you. You ought to do yours to us. If you choose, you can now put an end to the greatest sorrow of our lives, and yet you do not intend to do it." This was said tentatively. Lady Brooke was very anxious to know the effect of her words, but Olive did not seem to notice them.

"Uncle Richard and Aunt Selina are my real father and mother," she cried, in great agony. "Let me go to them—I entreat you to let me go."

"My dear, I advise you to keep away from your Uncle Richard and your Aunt Selina, with your troubles; if all accounts be true, they have quite enough of their own!"

"I know uncle is not quite so well, but I may go to them—they will take me in, I am sure."

"If your uncle's illness continues long, it will be quite as much as he can do to keep himself."

"I will help them—I will work like a servant for them."

"You forget that they have girls too! I dare say your uncle's true reason for sending them to school at Brighton was your being in Harley Street."

"But what am I to do, then? I am not to go to Uncle Richard, and you and papa do not want me in India."

"That is just the very question which I want you to take into consideration; not that I should have any objection to having you in India with us—it is your father—I am sure he could not bear it! We hoped that you would use the splendid chances which have been given you and marry. If you do not wish to do that, you must be content to be somewhat of a burden to your friends!"

Olive groaned. Her mother's disgrace cut her to the heart. She sank down in a corner of the carriage, and seemed to abandon herself to despair.

"Let me settle what you had better do," cried Lady Brooke. "Here in this bag I have pens, ink, and paper. Sit up, my poor child, and write one kind word to Sir John Ellerton who loves you. The merest scrawl will do—you can't write much in a shaking railway carriage. We will have it posted at the next station. That will end all

our troubles. It will make him happy, and you happy, and give the greatest possible delight to your poor father. He will be a new man when he hears of it, and will, I know, set off to England to see you. Come, Olive dear, here is all you want, ready for you—be quick.”

Olive quivered in every nerve, but she did not move to obey, nor did she speak.

“Olive dear, don’t you hear me?” said Lady Brooke, raising her voice and repeating her words lest the noise should have drowned them. But words seemed to have lost their power over Olive. She was huddled up in a corner, in a stupor of grief, from which there was no rousing her. Once more Lady Brooke pleaded with her, but in vain; and seeing this, she carefully replaced her writing materials in her most luxurious traveling-bag. Only for the time, though—that was her hope. “What a long time the next station is in coming!” thought she; “and there is no seeing out of the window now that so much of that tiresome snow is falling. And how dark it makes it! I can scarcely read.” Not that she wanted to read just then. It was two o’clock, and she had been traveling for six hours. She was hungry. Besides, she was rather distressed about Olive’s grief. “Come, Olive,” she said at length, “don’t take this so terribly to heart! Many a girl has far worse things than this to bear.”

No answer came from the prostrate Olive. Lady Brooke began to be rather uncomfortable about her, but she soon shook off that feeling. “After all,” she thought, “I have done her a great kindness. She will fret a little longer, and then she will ask me to write to the Ellertons for her. No one could have managed her better than I have done.” She opened her case of sandwiches, and placed her silver flask of sherry within reach. “You must take a sandwich, dear,” she said, and gently tried to make Olive sit up. But Olive refused all food, and when Lady Brooke saw that there was a risk of provoking a fresh burst of sorrow if she persisted in her entreaties, she left her in peace. She leisurely enjoyed the sandwiches, and as Olive did not seem inclined to take any, she all but finished them, likewise

the sherry; and just as she had done that, the train, with much grinding of machinery, entered a station. "Oh, please, not in here!" cried Lady Brooke to a burly guard who was trying to find a place for some one. He partly opened the door, said the train was very full, and did not seem disposed to go elsewhere. A gentleman pressed closely behind him, warmly cloaked and thickly sprinkled with snow. Lady Brooke shivered at the sight of it.

"Not in here, I beg," she again said. "I have an invalid here—the gentleman might not like to get in if he knew—she is just recovering from an illness—a fever."

A glance at Offie, who, white as a sheet, lay back with closed eyes in the corner, quickly drove the intruder away. "It was an artist," thought Lady Brooke. "Oh, I am glad that I kept him out! I am sure he is an artist, by those sticks."

She called to a porter and demanded fresh hot-water tins, and then slowly and carefully made herself ready for sleep, for the train would not reach Edinburgh till ten o'clock that night.

CHAPTER XX.

Hamlet. The air bites shrewdly: it is very cold.

Horatio. It is a nipping and an eager air.—*Hamlet.*

LADY BROOKE awoke suddenly: she had been dreaming that she was in the steamboat on her way back to India, and as soon as she was sufficiently awake to be able to think, she knew why she had dreamed this—the train was moving with a strange undulating motion, something like the rising and falling of waves. This, however, only occurred occasionally; then it went on again as before, but there was no sound of wheels. Once or twice, it seemed to meet with some obstacle which checked it altogether; but after stopping a minute or so, it once more made its way onwards. "I suppose," thought she, after puzzling herself to know what this could mean, "they want to stop at some station, and are not slackening speed

properly. If we stay here long enough, I'll get out for a minute or two, and walk up and down. I feel quite stiff with sitting so long in one position, and the cold is intolerable!—I never in my life felt anything like it!" She lay back listening to the wind, and waiting till the train stopped and she could do this. It was not long before it did stop, and then she opened the window, at the same time dislodging a thick covering of snow which had built itself up outside.

"No wonder I could see nothing!" she exclaimed; but the moment the window was open, a chill blast of wind drove a volley of glass-like grains of snow in her face. In spite of the pain of this, she again tried to look out, but could see no platform. Nothing, indeed, was to be seen but snow, and that very obscurely, for it was now perfectly dark.

"How stupid of them to stop the train before they had got all the carriages into the station! I did so want to walk about a while. What can they mean by being so tiresome? Guard! Guard! Porter!" cried she; but no one came, and another cutting blast drove her back, and brought so much snow with it that she was glad to shut the window. It was five o'clock, she could just see that by the poor light of the lamp. Five hours more before they could reach Edinburgh! "Olive, are you awake?" she cried. "Do answer—you make me very anxious! It is dreadful to be shut up in the dark with a person who won't answer when she is spoken to!"

Olive made some reply between a gasp and a groan, which did not seem to promise much conversational enjoyment, so Lady Brooke left her alone again—put some *eau-de-Cologne* on her own forehead, and threw herself back, exclaiming, "Five long hours more of this! What a great deal I have gone through for the sake of that girl in the corner!—but I certainly did not bargain for a wretched journey like this! And I do believe these natives enjoy it," for she saw obscure forms moving about outside. "I should have thought by far the best thing they could do would be to hurry on and get out of this uncomfortable

country. Five hours more! It will be midnight before we get to bed, and to-morrow we have another long railway journey before us! Perhaps it would be better to wait in Edinburgh until Sir John Ellerton comes. We might do that. As Olive was not able to write her letter, I will telegraph to him when we get there. She is sure to be willing to let me do that—more than willing, I should say—glad. Let me see: I might use this time that we are in the station to compose my telegram to him. They only allow twenty words, and I am sure, if this cold goes on increasing, I shall not be able to do it afterwards. Twenty words, addresses free. Miss Brooke—no, I'll say Lady Brooke, Lockhart's Hotel, Edinburgh, to Sir John Ellerton, Bart., Invergrudie. 'Join us here, if you can, if only for a day. Both of us are anxious to see you.' Nineteen words. What a clever woman I am! I did that without one bit of counting—just by instinct. I'll have my twenty words, though—what shall I say? 'Both of us are *extremely* anxious to see you.' How the poor dear silly man will hurry off to us!"

Just as Lady Brooke had got so far, she became aware that some one was trying to rub the snow off the window on her side—it was covered again already.

"I'll open the window," cried she.

"For God's sake, keep the winda steikit, leddies," cried the man outside, "or the snaw will fill up the coach and smoor ye! Dinna be frichted, leddies, but I'm fearin' we shall hae to bide here for twa—three hours longer. We're clean brocht up wi' the snaw! It's an awfu' nicht! But there is naething to fear."

Lady Brooke wondered what all this gibberish meant. She partly grasped that the train was stopped by the snow, and, as she had no idea of being in bondage to circumstances, she cried, "Make it go on, please; I must be in Edinburgh to-night. Is it the engine?"

"Leddies, we canna gang ae fit further, dae what we wull!"

"But if we have pushed our way so long, can't we go on pushing it?" said she very impatiently.

"Na, na, the snaw's just like a deid wa' forenenst us! We've been warstling our way through it for some time, but we canna gang further till were howkit out." So saying, the man began to go.

"It's no use to go away until you have told me what you are doing to get us out! I can't stay here—I never felt so cold in the whole course of my life!"

"Ma faith, leddy, we wadna bide here if we had our wull, I can tell ye! We're a' as keen to get hame as onybody can be." He saw her preparing to say more, but was impatient to get on to the other carriages, and said, "Ye'd better steik the winda, and the ventilator at the ither side o' the coach maun be steikit an' a'—the drift's o' that side, ye see. God be aboot us, but it's an awfu' nicht!" Then he went.

Olive was on the windward side: for some time she had been uncomfortably aware that fine, sand-like snow was forcing its way in through every crack and crevice. Her head had been partly resting against one of the side windows; she tried to move, and found that her hair was tightly frozen to the glass. She tore herself loose and closed the ventilator. The window itself was completely blocked up. There was not nearly so much snow on the window by which Lady Brooke was sitting, but even when it was entirely cleared, the evening was so wild and dark that they could see nothing. Not a star was visible—no light whatever to be seen but that which proceeded from the snow itself—a shrill wind was raging. Inside, the feeble oil lamp provided by the railway company did but little to dispel the gloom. Its light was a mere spark, and even that often seemed about to die away altogether.

"I wish we were not so entirely alone," wailed Lady Brooke. "It seems dreadfully cruel to leave two poor women alone on such a night as this! If they do not dig the train out soon, the carriages will be covered, and then we shall be suffocated. Perhaps all the other passengers have got away to some safe place, and just because we have no gentleman with us, we are left forgotten here!" Thus Lady Brooke lamented unceasingly. The darkness

and horrible loneliness alarmed her, and then, worse than all, there was the danger of another train coming and running into theirs, and cutting them all to pieces. When she thought of this, her agony became so excessive, that even Olive pitied and became strong to comfort her. Their situation really was very pitiable, for the icy-cold wind found its way into their comfortless place of refuge and chilled them to the bone. Neither of them knew how much time had passed by, when they once more heard some one outside. Regardless of cold and wind, Lady Brooke hurried to the window to try to open it, but her hands trembled so that they would hardly serve her. At last it slid heavily down, leaving an opening of a few inches.

"Madam," said a gentleman with a remarkably pleasant voice, "I have come to offer my services to you. I think, when I was about to get into your carriage a short while since, you said that you had charge of an invalid. This unfortunate detention must be a great inconvenience to you!"

"Great! it is terrible! You have come to offer your services, you say; but what can you do for us, unless you can get us out?"

"I wish I could get you out, but there is nothing for it now but sitting still. I could fill your hot-water tin," said he; "that was what I thought of doing. The water in the boiler is still warm."

"You would do us an infinitely greater service if you would explain to us what has happened, and give us some hope of getting away. But don't stand outside there in the storm. Come in and stay with us a while. It is terrible to be alone here, knowing nothing!"

The stranger had a pass-key. He was entirely wrapped in a large piece of waterproof which had come out of the van. He opened and shut the door as quickly as he could, but was still not quick enough to keep out all the snow. "Bad as it is here, it is better on this side than on the other," said he cheerfully. "If I had opened the other door, we should never have got it shut again! The carriage would have been choked up in a moment!"

"Why worse on this side?" inquired Olive.

"The wind blows from that quarter. It is the wind which is our enemy, not the snow. There is no snow to hurt us if the wind had not got up so suddenly.—You can have no idea of its strength. It is one incessant blast of wind, laden with icy grains of snow. Don't you feel how they force their way in everywhere? You have very wisely closed the ventilator, but still it is coming in!"

"I felt it," said Lady Brooke; "it dashed against my face just like sand in the desert. I have lately returned from India, so you may imagine how I suffer! No one here can feel the cold as I do; but now, please, let me know how long we shall have to stay in this horrible place?"

This was just what he was unable to do; he made some answer, weak as regarded information, but strong in hope. The guard had gone to make their situation known—he would soon return with a train full of provisions, and a gang of plate-layers—all would be right when once they came. "Are you very cold?" he said, turning to Olive; he remembered that she was ill, and pitied her.

"Yes, rather, thank you; but I am well wrapped up."

"Perhaps there is a fire to which we could go?" suggested Lady Brooke. "They must have a fire for the engine."

"That, I am sorry to say, was damped out long ago! One or two of the passengers were trying to light a fire in one of the vans, but I don't believe it will be of any use—it will only fill the van with smoke. There is no danger!" cried he, for he saw Lady Brooke was alarmed at this. "They have put a little fuel in an iron bucket—that's all; it can't set anything on fire."

"Oh, but there is another thing!" cried she, in renewed terror; "I have quite forgotten to ask you about the danger of a collision. I am terribly afraid of that!"

"Indeed, there is no danger," he replied. "Not the very least. The time for alarm is over!"

"Then we were in danger!" cried she, "and no one told us!"

"No one knew but the guard and railway-servants."

They did not tell us—a great many lives would have been lost in the snow if they had! I only heard of their anxiety when it was over.”

“I don’t believe it is over! Why should I! People never tell the truth on these occasions! I will not sit here to be cut to pieces—they shall not force me to do it!” and so saying, she began to open the window.

He restrained her. “Madam, be reasonable; I will tell you exactly what amount of danger there was, and then you will trust me when I tell you that there is none now.”

Lady Brooke’s face showed only a limited degree of confidence. The stranger proceeded. “I dare say you noticed that our train went very unsteadily for some time before it actually stopped—it went up and down, as if it were passing over mounds of earth.” Lady Brooke nodded and said she had been asleep most of the afternoon, but still at one time she had felt this, and it was like going over waves.

“Those were smaller snow-drifts, and we pushed our way through them, but the cutting was low then, and they were low in proportion; afterwards, when the cutting was deeper, the snow of course was deeper too, and we pushed it up like a great wall in front of us, but it soon choked up the engine.”

“Yes, I know all that,” said Lady Brooke impatiently. “The guard told me that.”

“Not the guard. He did not waste a moment in speaking to any one. He just gave the train and the passengers in charge to the driver, caught up some fog-signals and his red lamp, and ran off to protect his train.”

“I knew there was danger!” cried Lady Brooke much excited.

“Yes, but it’s over,” said he. “Let me tell you the whole amount of it. He, I believe, had been in a great fright for some time before our train was blocked up, lest a heavy mineral train, which would leave Blair Angus station five minutes after we did, should overtake and run into us. The danger was great then, for we had lost much time in cutting through the drifts—we were late, and the

mineral train would come quicker than we did, for it would get the benefit of the track our wheels had cut—though that, to be sure, fills fast. Besides, a mineral train is so much heavier, it pushes its way with more force. The guard knew all this, but he did the only thing in his power to save us—he went off through the snow at once and stopped the other train. The danger was over before any of us even imagined that it existed. I assure you this is true.”

“You may be mistaken. He may never have got up to this mineral train. It may still come—or if not, something else may. Don’t ask me to stay here in a carriage at the very end of the train, just because I am told there is no danger!” So saying, she rose, and began to consider what she would take with her.

“Indeed, you had better stay; if the mineral train had been coming, it would have been here more than an hour ago; and if it is stopped behind us, nothing else can come—that is simply impossible!”

“I do not mean to run any risk,” said she. “Can I not be taken to a carriage quite at the other end of the train? You came to offer to help me—will you help me in the way I wish!”

“Of course I will, but you will get very wet. The snow is up to my waist.”

“But I can slip along that board the guard stands on when he comes.”

“Yes, but each carriage is separated from the other by quite a high wall of snow which has blown through between them—however, if you wish it, I will take you, though indeed you had better stay here.”

“If I wish it!” cried Lady Brooke almost angrily.

“Then I am at your service; but please, ladies, do not ask me to take both of you at once. I will take you, madam, now, and then return for your daughter.” Olive raised a listless head. She said she was not afraid, and would prefer to stay where she was.

“You are right,” he replied; “you have no idea what it is outside, and you have been ill.”

"I will come back to you, dear, after a while," said Lady Brooke. "Perhaps you are right to stay here, but I should not know a moment's peace if I did. I can send Pearson to stay with you. This gentleman will no doubt be kind enough to bring her here."

"Oh, no, leave poor Pearson where she is; she has a very bad cold: don't bring her out."

"I will go to a carriage with other people in it," said Lady Brooke preparing to depart without more ado. "It is so miserable to be alone!"

He thought her selfishness stupendous! She was seeking what she believed to be safety, and leaving her invalid daughter to be killed. She remembered that she herself did not like to be alone, but never once thought of her poor pale daughter, whom she was deserting without any consideration as to what her feeling about solitude might be!

"I don't mind waiting here, while you go and pick out a suitable carriage for me—we should get very wet if we had to spend much time in seeking one," said Lady Brooke.

"I might not be able to come back," he answered, determined not to be her victim to this extent. Together they went. He had rather a satisfaction in knowing that, in spite of all his exertions to protect her, and her own to protect herself, she must have got very wet. He then went to look for Pearson. He was resolved to do that, for he was sorry for the poor girl whom he had just left. She was evidently not so selfish as her mother. He did not succeed in finding Pearson, and at last the extreme violence of the storm drove him back to his own carriage; but he could not forget Olive's face of suffering, and after an hour or so he resolved to return to the carriage where she was now spending these hours of darkness alone. He hastily caught up two or three things likely to be useful, and, difficult as the short journey was, made his way back to her. She was sitting with her head bent down, just as he had left her. He opened the door quickly, got in, closed it, and then said, "I have come to see if you

have changed your mind about staying here alone, and would like me to escort you to your mother?"

The thought of going to her mother brought no consolation to poor Olive; she had no mother to whom she could fly for comfort. "I'll stay here," she replied; "unless you think I ought to go."

"It is for you to judge," said he; "it is a terrible night for you to be here alone. The mere thought of what you might be suffering has made me anxious. I have been trying to find your maid, but have not succeeded."

"Oh, thank you. You still think it quite safe to stay here? I mean that there is no fear of a collision?"

"None whatever! The train which was to have followed us has either been stopped by the guard, or snowed up."

"Thank you," said Olive simply. "Then, I'll stay here."

He liked her trustful manner. How very ill she looked! "I am afraid this is a great trial to you," said he kindly. "You have been ill."

"No, I have not been ill—do not be anxious about me."

How odd! had that fever been invented to keep him out of the carriage? "I understood the lady who was with you—your mother, I presume?—to say that you were just recovering from a fever." He said this with great hesitation.

"You have made some mistake," said Olive, who had not heard Lady Brooke make this statement. "I have had no fever, no illness of any kind. I do feel ill now, but it is only fatigue, and perhaps I am hungry," she added, for she now remembered that she had not eaten anything since a little before eight in the morning, when she had left Invergrudie. It seemed years since she had been there.

He began to unfasten a case which he had brought with him, and said, "I am going to make you a cup of tea. I will have it ready directly. You see, I am a vagrant by profession, and have to be independent of other folks."

She watched him unpacking his cooking apparatus, and

was soothed by the sight of his dexterous little arrangements. It went into a very small compass. He had everything he wanted but water, and one plunge of the small kettle into the snow soon supplied him with materials for that. He had some sandwiches and biscuits, and these he set before her. The tea was delicious, and refreshed her. She made him share the food. "It really is very kind of you to give me this," said she. "I have not had anything to eat since early morning. What a dreadful day this has been!"

She was thinking of all that she had suffered, but he misunderstood her meaning, and replied: "Scotland is a splendid wild country, but, like all wild creatures, it is apt to turn and rend you when you least expect it. I ought to have gone home three weeks ago, but stayed on to see more of its winter aspect; I did not, however, expect to be caught in this way!"

"How long shall we really have to stay here, do you think?"

"Oh, that depends on how long it is before help can be sent to us. The guard would make our situation known at Blair Angus, and they would soon organize a relief train; but when we get out, depends on how many other trains have to be cut out between us and that place. Don't think about it. Will you allow me to arrange your rugs a little better for you: and then do please try to forget where you are."

He shook off the snow which had forced its way in; he hung up one rug between her and the window, to keep out this intrusive drift. He brought her to the side where Lady Brooke had been sitting—that lady always did secure the best of everything—and then, with this fresh arrangement, and after some food, she felt considerably better, though a heavy heart-ache still remained. He saw that she was very unhappy, and tried to make her forget all the miseries of her situation, for to these he naturally attributed her dejection. He talked for some time on any subject which came uppermost—anything to make her look less sad. At first her answers were very

short and sparing, but gradually he succeeded in arousing her attention a little, and at last she even appeared to take a faint pleasure in his conversation, but he never detected the slightest trace of a smile on her face.

"It is very irritating," said he, after about an hour had passed in this way, "to be suffering thus from one of Nature's fiercest ill-temperers, and get no good from it! This is nothing but a very sulky, ugly storm."

"How do we get good from Nature's ill-temperers?" asked Olive. "They can never do us anything but harm, can they?"

"I am detected talking shop," he replied gayly. "I am a painter—a landscape-painter—and my greatest delight, as well as profit, is to watch a really fine storm. I would walk twenty miles for the chance of doing that; but this has all the dangers and discomforts of a grand one, and is nothing but a savagely fierce wind sweeping the snow off the moors."

He was a landscape-painter! Olive looked earnestly at him; before, she had only been incidentally aware that he was tall, young, and handsome. She had thought of his kindness, not of his looks. But he was a landscape-painter! She could not see very well, but she thought his hair was dark and curly, his eyes seemed very bright and kindly, and somewhat meditative; he wore a dark beard, and had a very pleasant voice. His hands were small and shapely. She had just seen how deft they were. Her heart gave a great leap and stood still. Had she sat for hours with that hand in hers, had she looked into those eyes for all the joy of her life some ten years ago, and had she kissed those lips? Was it, could it be, her old playfellow Willie?

CHAPTER XXI.

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble care and delicate fears;
A heart the fountain of sweet tears,
And love, and thought, and joy.

WORDSWORTH.

OLIVE dared not trust herself to speak. She felt that her voice would betray her. If, by any chance, this stranger should turn out to be the much-loved companion of her childhood, and if he were half as nice to her as of old, she had at any rate a brother now when she was so very miserable. Never in her life had she been so wretched as to-day. Perhaps that was why he was going to be given back to her. Heaven was kind, and had sent her help in her extreme need! She did not speak. She was watching each movement, perusing each feature, and wondering whether this could possibly be he. He had left Mr. Ardrossan's only a few days before, so it was not so utterly unlikely as at first sight appeared. He observed the change in her manner, thought she was becoming unhappy again, and said, "Try to forget about this storm. Shall I go away? Shall I try to find your mother, or your maid? Perhaps you would like to go to sleep? I wish you could do that, and just wake up again to find the train cut out, and yourself on your way home."

The storm was raging as loudly as ever, but Olive neither heard nor thought about it—for the moment, too, she had forgotten that she had no home. "Oh, please do not go away," cried she. "There is something I so much wish to ask you. Do you know Mr. Ardrossan?"

"Yes, I know him," he replied with some surprise. "I have just been staying with him. I left his house a few days ago to pay a visit at Dunkeld. What a charming man he is!"

Olive restrained the exclamation of joy which rose to her lips. She was almost certain it was he—but she

would put one more question. "What beautiful pictures he has! I saw them lately," (she could not believe it was only yesterday). "Has he any of yours? Perhaps you never part with them?" she added, blushing.

"Oh, yes, I do. The only wonder is that any one cares to have them! He has one picture of mine, and a water-color sketch."

"Ah, then I know your picture. It is a stream with some ash-trees. He showed it to me. I knew it before he showed it to me, though; I saw it in the Academy. He showed me the sketch too;" and here words failed her. It was he, and at last she had found him, for the sketch represented the very place where she and Willie used to wait for each other.

She was resolved not to disclose herself. She must hear more. She longed to know if he remembered her and ever thought of those days. If he did, how delighted he would be when she told him her name, and they two were once more friends!

"I am rather anxious about that sketch," said he. "Mr. Ardrossan asked me to do him a tree-subject, and I did that as a design to show him, but I am half afraid he is not likely to care for it."

Olive smiled; her smile was a very happy one. The Willie of old used to be just a little matter-of-fact sometimes, and this speech which, with its business flavor, fell very flat on one full of romantic thoughts and memories, reminded her of other speeches made long ago, which had failed in the same way. But this time she wronged him, as she quickly discovered when he answered her indignant inquiry as to what Mr. Ardrossan could possibly find to dislike in it by saying, "He may very likely think it a poor design. Certain associations make it interesting to me, but he, of course, will only judge by what is given."

"But I know he likes it immensely," said Olive. "He told me he did; and it is beautiful!"

"I should like to paint it for him. If I could do anything well, it ought to be that; but do you not feel the want of figures in the sketch?"

"Perhaps. But what kind of figures would you put?" Olive intended this as a very searching question.

"I don't want to put any. I know it ought to have some, but I don't want to put them in. It is a recollection of my youth, and a very vivid one, but I can't let the public have the whole of it."

"What figures would you put in if you were painting it for no one to see but yourself?" asked Olive.

He smiled at the directness of her inquiry; but on such a night as this, conversation could not be expected to flow in very conventional channels; so he answered: "I would paint the person who is, in my mind, always associated with the place, and for whose sake it is that I care to paint it at all."

Olive looked up eagerly. He said, "Now, I am sure you think that something very romantic is coming, and that this dismal night is going to be enlivened by sentimental confessions. How disappointed you will be when I tell you that she was only a little girl—a child of ten!"

Olive was not disappointed; she had heard what she hoped to hear, and was delighted. She was thinking of the moment, now so rapidly approaching, when she would reveal herself to him, and enjoy his pleasure in finding her once more. He observed her silence, and continued: "I see you are disappointed that she was not a grown-up lady, but I must honestly say that no grown-up lady has ever done half so much for me as that little child did."

"What did she do?"

"Well, for one thing, she opened my eyes to the beauty of this world of ours, and of a life spent in enjoying and trying to understand it."

"Mr. Morrison!" cried Olive—"I know your name from your pictures)—how can you talk so? A child of ten do this for you? Besides, you can have needed no one to point out the beauty of nature to you—you must have been a born artist—any one can see that from your pictures!"

"I may have been born with some love of nature, but I do assure you that she awakened it. She was no older

than I tell you, but so full of poetry and enthusiasm that she colored the whole of my after life for me. Poor little thing! I dare say she often despaired of me—boys are stupid creatures at the best, and I was worse than most."

Olive was afraid to speak, lest she should put an end to a conversation which was so interesting to her. He saw that she was listening very intently, and was pleased to see her looking brighter—besides, he himself had a certain enjoyment in dwelling on memories which had slumbered in his heart for so many years. Had she been an acquaintance or friend, she would not have heard a word of this; but it is astounding what even reserved English people will say to strangers whom they meet far away from home, for the very reason that they never expect to meet them again. Still, he felt that he had indulged in a great deal of autobiography, and was not disposed to continue in the same strain.

Olive said, "Won't you tell me a little more? There is no harm in talking of what happened so very long ago, and I do so want to know how any one so young could possibly do all that you say this child did for you."

"Oh, you know Wordsworth's child, that Nature took to make a lady of her own out of?—well, mine was exactly such a one. Her love of flowers and fields; and her accurate observation of everything about them, were wonderful; and she had a pretty story, or fairy tale, for every turn and corner. I am sure it was a good thing for me to have Nature associated forever with her and her pretty ideas and beautiful stories. She used to tell them by the hundred, and to form such delightful plans for our future life. We were to get all our pleasure out of books and Nature, and being together—she really had a very fair idea of what Wordsworth calls plain living and high thinking, though I remember she had one feminine weakness—we were always to wear ruby velvet."

Olive sighed to think how far she herself had strayed away from this conception of high living—once it was her own, now she wanted dresses and parties, and dancing and pleasure; and only two days ago she had promised to

marry a man whom she did not love, just because he was rich, and his money would procure her these things. She thought of this now with shame and great abasement, and humbly said: "It is very hard to keep to one's first notions of what is right and nice!"

"I am thankful to ~~say~~ that I have not kept to mine! My early ideal, if I had one, was that of most boys. I intended to do what I had to do pretty fairly, and thought I should be a very happy man if I left off work in a position two or three degrees above that of my father. I should probably never have had any other, had it not been for this little girl. Her influence, however, told on me much more strongly after I was parted from her. When with her, I never could be made to think. Most likely I was satisfied with enjoying her company, and never asked myself what made it so delightful. I took all her pretty little ways and joy in nature as a matter of course when with her; but when she left me I knew better, for I came across people of a very different stamp. Did you not think Mr. Ardrossan a very delightful man to talk to?"

"Oh, please don't change the conversation just yet. Do tell me a little more."

"There is no more to tell—I am afraid I have bored you with what I have told."

Olive was pining to reveal herself, but first she wished to hear a few words more. Then she would do it, and, please God, henceforth, she would no longer feel so much alone in the world. "You don't mind my asking you to talk about this, I hope?" said she. "I am so interested in all you tell me."

"Oh, it is a pleasure to me to speak of her, but I think I have told you all that there is to tell. Let me see; she was brave, loyal, very unselfish, and a little genius, very pretty herself, and she had a most perfect setting. She lived in a highly picturesque old grange, and her family was respected by all who knew them—I forget what particular good thing they had done to earn this good opinion, but I think they came splendidly out of some money transaction."

He stopped. He had summed up all that he had to say in these words, and was evidently not going to tell her any more. The time to reveal herself had now come. Olive's heart swelled. She would put one question—she would say, "Then, you have never seen her since?" And when he said "No," she would exclaim, "You see her now! I am the little girl you once knew—changed, but the same!" Very nervously, therefore, she said, "You have never seen her since?"

He replied, "Never! I can give you no idea how I used to long to do so. I don't wish it now."

This most unexpected speech threw Olive back on herself with a shock that was most terrible. She raised her eyes to his in the utmost surprise and distress. It was too dark for him to see her expression, but he accepted it as interrogative, and replied, "I wish to keep my recollection of her unspoilt by reality. I dare not try to see her."

"But if you saw her by chance?"

"I hope I never shall! I know I should not like her."

This was too much for Olive; she had hoped so much from this meeting, and it was going to be as bitter a disappointment as the rest of her life.

"You look on this as foolish," said he; "but can you not understand how it is? I like to think of the bright-eyed, bright-haired, cotton-frocked, natural little creature I used to know. I am afraid, if I saw her now, all would be different; and with the sight of her as she is, the child of my recollection would perish too. Would not you feel the same? If there was a part of your life which stood out apart as perfectly happy and delightful—which you could summon up at will to delight you as a beautiful picture would do—would you run the risk of seeing it all dispersed forever by a reality which was disagreeable, if not detestable?"

"But," cried Olive, "it seems terribly hard to use such words, or to imagine that there is any chance of such a thing! You do not know that this would be the case: why are you so determined to think the worst?"

"But I have reason to believe that it would be so.

I have heard of her from time to time. She is very beautiful, I know, but she is not what she used to be."

Olive sighed.

"Ah, you do not like an ugly ending to what you are kind enough to enjoy as a pretty little story; but the end is not ugly to me, if I keep away from her. I can shut out the present, and think only of the past, and for that I shall always be grateful."

"But tell me first a little more about the present. What have you heard to make you speak thus?"

"Well, if you wish it; but I speak of the present under protest, for I feel it treason against the past. I know I should not like her. She has changed. She used to be natural; now one day she appears in some extravagant last-century dress which no one wears but herself, and the next in the most expensive costume a court milliner can concoct. I remember her with her poor little hands full of hedge-row flowers, and as happy as a queen when she found a new one. Now she takes the roses out of her bonnet to sell them at a guinea apiece to any one who will give it."

"At a bazaar, you must mean?" cried Olive.

"Of course."

"Well, is it so very wrong?"

"Perhaps not, but it shows the kind of world in which she lives. She spends her whole life in gayety—balls, bazaars, and such things, are all she cares for now. She and I belong to different worlds, and are best apart. Her father is an officer of very high rank, mine was a clerk. I do not suppose that, even if I wished it, I should ever be allowed to speak to her—my rank is far below hers."

"Oh, but I'm sure she would never think of that," Olive hastened to say; "she would be only too glad to see you again."

"I am not sure that I wish it. I used to wonder if she could ever overlook the difference in station between us; now my feeling has changed. I do not think that I could ever bring myself to see much of her relations—some of them are anything but creditable. However, the truth is,

that it is vain to try to knit up the present with the past: each part of our lives has its own pleasures and hopes."

"I am afraid you are right," exclaimed Olive, who was still quivering with pain at his last speech; "it is indeed in vain."

"Yes, it is a pleasant memory; if I tried to get more I should lose all. I did go to the village where I met her. I had longed to go there for years before I succeeded in doing it."

"Well?" said Olive eagerly, for with all her heart she too longed to go there once more.

"Well, I was wofully disappointed! From my recollection, I expected to find a perfectly beautiful village, with fields and woods, and trees and everything else, far prettier than could be found elsewhere."

"And you mean to say you did not?" she exclaimed impatiently.

"Yes; it was a very poor commonplace village, and I was grievously disappointed! I was vexed that I had gone to see it, but the same misfortune would most likely befall me if I saw her."

"Don't try to see her! Keep away from her! I am quite of your way of thinking," cried Olive, irretrievably piqued by his words. It was the slight to her dear Austerfield which had finally done this. She could partly forgive what he had said of herself, for conscience told her that there was a great deal of truth in it; but there could be no foundation for what he had said of that dear place, and she felt as if she could never forgive him.

"Ugly as the place is," said she, rather bitterly, after a short pause, "you were able to make a beautiful drawing of it."

"Ah, I shall always think that particular spot beautiful," he answered. "It is astonishing what associations will do for a place!"

"Enjoy your associations!" thought Olive; "dwell on your sentimental recollections undisturbed. You might have had the reality back, if you had liked. You might have had me as your true and loving friend." He did not wish it, so there was no more to be said. From the

instant he had said that, she had given up all thought of revealing herself to him. This was the meeting for which she had once longed so ardently!

"Let me help you!" said he; he saw her struggling with a large flake of snow, which, in spite of all precautions, had found its way into the carriage. It was on her shoulder, and as he stooped to remove it, he saw how much more ill she looked than before. "I was hoping that you were better; I am afraid the nonsense I have been talking has tired you. I have been very thoughtless; is there nothing I can do for you?"

"Nothing," she said, passing a weary hand over an aching forehead; "nothing at all, thank you."

"You will perhaps feel better if we do not speak. I have been foolish."

"I think we had better not talk, perhaps," said Olive sadly, for she was wishing with all her heart that she had not seen him. "I beg your pardon," she added, with some consciousness that he might be reading her thoughts; "I only say so because I am all at once feeling very tired."

"Oh, do let me go and try to bring your mother back to you."

Olive shuddered. Any one rather than Lady Brooke! She shook her head.

"Then, your maid? I will make a thorough search for her."

"I am afraid I must ask you to bring her—that is, if you can."

"I will take great care of her," replied he; "but come she must."

Olive's ghastly face made him wretchedly anxious. He got out, and found the way more blocked up than ever. The driver, stoker, and some of the men were sitting huddled up in one of the carriages, into which he dived in search of Pearson. They were all smoking as if their lives depended on it.

"Ye seem an unco supple young man," said a voice from the depths of the van. "How do ye manage to get about sae weel?"

"I have to do as well as I can. How long will it be before some help comes?"

"That's the varra thing we want to ken. I hope nae-thing's come to the gaird. I'm feared he has na managed to get on to Blair Angus."

"You surely don't think the poor fellow is lost in the snow?" asked Morrison.

"God only kens. It's a terrible nicht! Lord save us all! It's a thousand to ane if he wans to his journey's end!"

"Then, where is he?"

"Somewhere twixt here and Blair Angus in a snow-wreath."

"He shouldna hae attempted to lift his fit out o' the wheel-tracks," said one.

"Ma sang! he couldna lift it if he tried! I saw him start. The snaw was up to his waist; he never did lift his fit up, the snaw was ower deep for that, he just shoved the left fit after the richt, and so on, all the way."

"That would be well enough so long as there was a wheel-track," observed another; "but look how fast that would fill up?"

"Well, I hope he's a' richt. He's a strong eneuch chiel. Ma certy, but it needs a stave heart for sic work as he has afore him this nicht!"

"He is long in coming back. It's my belief he has met with an accident," said a voice from a dark corner.

"Nay, there's nae need to mak' sae sure o' that. The goods may be somewhere just ahint us, and that would hae to be howkit out afore any relief train could win to us, and baith an E. P. and an O. P. ought to hae left Blair Angus since we got ourselves stickit fast here."

"I tell you what," said Morrison; "some of us might go a little way along the line, for this relief train may be on its way; at all events, we might get some food from it, and let the men know where we are."

"What's the use?" cried the men unanimously. "Just foolhardiness! We'd be smooored in the snow! When the gaird went, if he had noucht else, he had the

wheel-tracks to guide him; there's naething o' that left now."

"There might be some sense in trying sic a thing if it was a matter o' life or death—not unless!"

Morrison pursued his search for Pearson. At last he found her in a corner of a first-class carriage, whither she had been conveyed by some of the railway servants for greater warmth and comfort. He had no difficulty in persuading her to go to her young mistress; but when they reached the carriage, and he had put Pearson into it, he was startled by a loud scream—Olive had fainted.

CHAPTER XXII.

O, for a horse with wings!—*Cymbeline*.

"SHE is dead, sir!" cried Pearson, throwing up her arms in despair. "Just look!" and when he did look, he was afraid that the maid's words were true. He soon recovered the first shock sufficiently to know that it was all but impossible that this should be the case, and that she had probably only fainted. With Pearson's help he raised her, dragged out the seats of the carriage, and made a bed for her to lie on. The rug which he had fastened up to protect her had fallen down, and now a fine shower of snow was descending lightly on her wan face. "Leave it," said he; "it will help to revive her."

He chafed her hands. He found Lady Brooke's *eau-de-Cologne* and poured some on her temples, but nothing seemed to restore her. While doing this, he was nearer to her and saw her features much more distinctly than the darkness had hitherto allowed him to do. Ill as she looked, the lines of her face were very fine, and he could see that, under other circumstances, she must be remarkably beautiful. Something in these lines stirred an old memory. "Pshaw!" said he to himself, "it is because we have been talking of those bygone days."

"Go on rubbing her hands—do all you can. I must go from carriage to carriage to see if I can find a doctor in the train, or, at any rate, some one who has some brandy," said he to the maid.

There was no doctor, no brandy, there was not even a fragment of food. Everything of that kind had been consumed hours before. He went back to the carriage where the driver and men were, and asked abruptly, "Does any one here know anything of the neighborhood where we are? How far is it to the nearest place where a doctor is to be found?"

The only one who happened to know the place was an Englishman, the others came from farther north. "If this is Macgillivray's Gap, as we reckon it is, we are a good two mile and a half from doctors and doctors' help. Auchterlundie is the nearest place to get it, and it lies about half a mile off the line."

"On which side—windward, or leeward?"

The speaker, who was close by the door, pointed to the windward side with a short stumpy pipe, and added, "There is a short cut by the fields, but it's past finding now. I know the place well; I've a sister married there."

"Is this village in the same direction as the guard went?"

"No, he went down the line; this is up."

"All right! Will any one go with me?" asked Morrison, hurriedly. "A lady is very ill—it may be a case of life and death."

No one refused, but no one offered to go. One said it would be but a corbie's errand, which allusion to Noah's first unsuccessful messenger was lost on Morrison, who was anxiously waiting their decision. They shuffled about uneasily on the seat, and said it was a terrible wild night, and it would surely be better to wait until daylight; any of them would be willing to go then. "If I go myself," said Morrison, "how am I to know where Auchterlundie is? There is no station there, you say?"

"There is a signalman's cabin, but nae doctor would come back wi' ye if ye did manage to win sae far, which is na likely."

"I don't know—he might; at all events, he would give me some brandy, or medicine, or something. One can't let a fellow-creature die without some help. Can any one furnish me with a lantern?"

A lantern was found. He pulled up the collar of his coat, and prepared to set out, but first he went back to see if the poor girl whom he had just left had recovered. She was still unconscious, but showed signs of coming round.

"Sir," said the maid, "it's my belief that it is only weakness. She is faint for want of food. She ought to have a good glass of wine. She is as cold as ice! It's just miserable to have nothing to give her."

"I will go and bring her something, but I shall be a long time in returning—ought you not to have her mother with you?—I'll bring her."

"Lor, sir, no! She'd want far more looking after than the poor young lady. She'd be in a hundred troubles about the harm she herself would take if this and that and the other wasn't got for her—that's her way. Just leave her where she is, I am not afraid of being alone."

It was now nearly eleven o'clock. Without more delay Morrison set out. The first plunge into the snow took him up to the waist, and he found it absolutely impossible to move farther. A little reflection made him work his way to the windward side, and there, as he expected, he found the snow hard enough to walk on; but he had now the whole force of the wind to contend with, and pitiless it was! One terrific blast after another came raging down from the heights on his right hand, bearing with it a deluge of cuttingly cold snow. It forced its way down his neck, it filled his ears, and blinded his eyes. Not a star, of course, was to be seen, not the faintest vestige of a track to be discovered; only one landmark guided him on his way—the telegraph-posts. Whenever he came to one of these, he knew that he was going right, and thus he slowly made his way onwards. He was perfectly aware that he carried his life in his hand—but one false step, or fall into a snowdrift, and there

would be little chance of his being able to extricate himself. In spite of the heat of the flame within it, the glass of his lantern was constantly becoming obscured by snow, which in two or three minutes congealed and turned into dull ice—he was continually obliged to stop to clear this. No doubt this fact accounted for his having seen no lamps when, in his search for the maid, he came to the end of the train. Two red ones had been burning there, but were now deeply buried, or extinguished.

The exertion of walking kept him thoroughly warm; only his face, ears, neck, and wrists suffered from exposure to the wind and snow, and they suffered frightfully. Hurry as he might, he made very slow progress, for the wind steadily opposed his advance. No beautiful place or object seen by him during the whole course of his life had ever given him half the pleasure that the sight of a telegraph-post now did. One by one, as he passed them, he uttered a fervent exclamation of gratitude. They were the sole link between himself and safety. They were white now with snow, but he had to keep very close to the side of the line where they were, for in this blinding drift he could not see any object that was even six feet from him. He might perhaps have got half way to Auchterlundie, when he came to a part where the line ran upon a higher level, and was consequently entirely free from snow. Every single grain had been blown off it. He set his feet firmly down on this, and began to stamp, to shake off all the snow which had collected about his feet and legs, when the wind suddenly blew out his lantern, and struggling onwards—for he felt this complete exposure to the wind was almost worse than the snow itself—he was caught by a strong gust, half blinded by the sand and gravel it was carrying with it, blown off the line down the embankment, and flung into a deep drift at the bottom. Somehow, he did not seem to sink very deep into it! There was an instant of the most intense physical relief—all battling was for the moment over, and he stopped to recover breath. He soon found however, that he had no time to lose, for he was rapidly being covered over. He

had been flung across a large railway-gate at the foot of the embankment, and this had saved his life. The wind-swept snow hardened instantly—he tried it, and found that it would now bear him. Having gained his feet, he stood for a minute to recover himself, and even during that short space of time saw the hole made by his body while he was lying across the gate fill up. “That might have been my grave!” thought he with a slight shudder. He did not much miss his lantern, for the snow gave out a kind of light which was enough for him. He struggled back to the line, planting each step with extreme care; he did not, however, risk a second violent attack from the wind, but crept along the bare ground on hands and knees. The part of the line which was thus cleared was about a sixteenth of a mile in length, then he came to the snow again, and had to fight his way through it as before. It was a hard and terrible battle, but at last he came to the signalman’s cabin. It was beneath the embankment, covered with snow, and Morrison only saw it by mere chance, for, near as it was, the light burning inside it was almost invisible in the storm. “I’ll cry out,” said he to himself, “and make him hear me;” but when he opened his lips to do so, he found he could make no sound—his voice had dwindled down to a feeble whisper. He tried the snow—it bore him, and he painfully made his weary way to the door, knocked loudly, and waited.

“Who’s there?” cried a voice through the keyhole.

Morrison did his utmost to return an answer which was audible, but could not, and had to content himself with knocking again. The door was opened, and he staggered in.

“God be about us! Who are ye, and what are ye doing out here on sic a nicht as this?” cried the man, and then he turned to the door; but short as had been the time spent in putting this inquiry, he found great difficulty in clearing the hinges and doorway so as to shut it. When at last he succeeded in doing so, and turned to look at the stranger who thus claimed his hospitality, he was startled at the expression in Morrison’s face. It was awful—so stony and

so rigid. One side of his head was literally covered with a sheet of solid ice.

"For God's sake sit down, sir! Sit down on the ground afore the fire and get yourself thawed—Ye'll be losing your ear if ye dinna mind what ye're aboot!"

That was what Morrison was afraid of; there was, indeed, every reason to fear it. He sat down in front of a warm fire, and gradually the heat brought off the whole mask of ice with the impression of the sufferer's ear molded into it as exactly as if it had been done by a sculptor in plaster.

"Never ye fash yersel wi' looking at that!" exclaimed the signalman, seeing Morrison holding it flat on one palm and gazing at it in rueful wonder. "Here's a cup of scalding het coffee for ye. Swallow it down, man, and ye'll feel the good of it directly. Come, there's naething like coffee, unless maybe it's whisky, and that's forbidden here, ye ken, and I hav' na ae a drop in the hut."

Morrison drank the coffee, broke the icicles off his hair and beard, and cleared his neck of snow. It was now thoroughly mixed with ice. His sleeves were full of it, his pockets also, and so were the tops of his boots. He sighed a heavy sigh of relief, which made his chest feel as if pierced by a hundred knives at once. He tried to speak, but still could only whisper, and it was painful to him even to do that.

"What in the name of heeven's brocht ye oot on sic a like nicht as this? It's neither fit for man nor beast."

"I was forced to come out. I have come from a train that is snowed up two miles farther down the line."

"Ay, my mate was wondering what had come till't."

"Well, I've got here, but I must go farther yet."

"The deil's in the man!—ye mean to tempt Prövidence! Deil a fit can ye steer out of this the nicht—it's mair than ye can dae, or onybody else! Hae some mair coffee, and just bide whaur ye are till daylight, when my mate is sure to be here to relieve me. Ye ken it's agin the laws for onybody to come into my place here, but there's naething doing the nicht, and naebody will be ony the wiser for it."

Morrison shook his head and pulled out his watch. As

might have been expected, the cold had stopped it. He looked at the large clock in the cabin. It was two o'clock. He had spent nearly three hours in walking two miles!

"Dinna be in sic a hurry! The wind is getting doun a bit, I do believe."

The wind was going down, but still it was very strong. "I must not stop," replied; he "your coffee has restored my strength. I must go on to Auchterlundie at once. I want a doctor. Do you know whereabouts in the place the doctor lives?"

"He lives at the far end o' the toun, but that's no saying much, for Auchterlundie is a wee bit place. He's maybe no just at his ain hoose the nicht. I jealousy it's maist likely ye'll find him at mine. I expect he's wi' my wife, for she was requiring his services. Ma hoose is the third ye come to on the left-hand side. Ye'll see a licht in the winda. Gang round the cabin when ye gae out, and haud awa' to your left hand for the feck of a hunner yards, or maybe twa."

Morrison rose to go. He was vexed at the loss of time, but this brief delay had been inevitable. He offered the man half a crown, but this he refused indignantly, and said,

"Tak' this muckle stick in yer hand, ye'll need it; pit a steich heart to the stee' brae, and God gang wi' ye. If ye come back this way, ye can tell me whether my wife has got a lassie or a laddie. Ye maun mind tak' tent that the snaw bears ye weel eneuch whaur the wind catches and hairdens it, but ye'll gang through it like leid if ye set yer fit on it in a place that's onyways proteckit."

Morrison had observed this fact for himself. He now used this knowledge carefully as he crept round the deeply embedded cabin. The village was only half a mile off. He traversed this part of the way much more quickly than that which he had gone before, but nevertheless it was no easy journey. He looked out for the promised light most eagerly, but the night must have improved very much or he could have had no chance of seeing this, unless close to it. After some time, he thought he did see a feeble glimmer, but whenever he most thought so, a fresh gust

of wind and snow seemed to cut him off from all hope of this kind.

There was a light! It was in what on any other occasion would have been an upper window of a small house. Now a hill of snow sloped up to it, but when Morrison tried to scale this, he found that it was on the wrong side of the house, and that the snow was soft. He hastily retreated, and stood considering what he could do to summon the inmates, now that he had no power to raise his voice to call them, or to make any sound louder than a husky whisper. The signalman had put a stick into his hand when he left the cabin. Morrison now tried to climb up the snow on the wind-raked side of the cottage, and to lean round the corner, and tap at the window where the light was visible, with his stick, but unfortunately it was too short, and he was terribly afraid of overbalancing himself, or finding some weak spot in the snow on which he was standing, and falling into the deep drift by the other side of the house, where he would have to lie without hope of help, now that his voice had left him and he could cry for none. Rather than descend without doing anything here, he contented himself with aiming hard blows at the walls of the room whence the light proceeded. "If it were but a London house!" thought he, calling to mind a night not so very long ago when he had seized on a hammer and a large nail to hang up a precious and newly-acquired "Liber" proof, and the second or third stroke of the hammer, had driven a brick out of the wall into the passage on the other side, with much less difficulty than noise. His heart well-nigh failed him when repeated blows seemed to call forth no answer—bring no help. What could he do at such an hour as this at houses where all were sound asleep? At last the window opened, and a woman put her head out to see what could be the matter. She cried, "Who's there?" but alas! Morrison could not bring forth any sound from his lips which could by any chance reach her ears. The wind, abated though it was, was still louder a hundred times than his faint whisper—but how this whisper hurt him!

Before she shut the window and left him to his fate, he had the lucky thought to shove his stick round the corner where she was, and aim one stroke more at the wall.

"Mercy on us!" cried she; "who's there?"

The doctor—he was there—came down-stairs at once, opened the door and forced a passage out, and then Morrison made his presence known.

"Come inside," said the doctor. "Drink some of this," was his next speech, as he poured out nearly a tumblerful of whisky. It tasted like pleasantly flavored water, but Morrison was mightily refreshed by it. Then he told his errand.

"I was just going home," said the doctor. "I'll come with you if you want me. As you say, the wind has certainly gone down. From what you tell me, I have no doubt the train is stopped in Macgillivray's Gap—I know the place very well; but it would have to be a very urgent case which would make me venture there if the weather was still as bad as it was half an hour ago! I canna, for the life of me, conceive how you ever got here! You have come a good three miles in the deep snow, without so much as a landmark! We can wait a quarter of an hour or so, I suppose. Every minute makes it safer. I don't mind a little snow—I'm used to that—it's the wind that's the deevil and a' to contend with!"

"Every minute may make it better for us, but it makes it worse for the poor young lady," said Morrison, much aggrieved; "and, of course, I have been very long on my way."

"But what can I do for her, when I am there? From all you tell me, I should say that there's nothing the matter with her except that she wants food and warmth, and getting away from that snow-trap. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go home now—it won't take me ten minutes both to go and come back. I'll rouse up my housekeeper, and make her get a warm bed ready, and some supper, and we will bring the lady and her mother here across the fields—that's the best thing we can do for her!"

"By the fields?"

"Yes. The moment the wind is down, that will be as good a road as you can have! The wind will have swept every bit of snow off them. You and I will go that way now, and see if it is practicable."

"I don't like losing sight of the telegraph-posts," said Morrison.

"Oh, you may trust yourself to me. If the wind lets us go that way at all, it will let us go safely. There'll be no snow there, I tell you, but it will lie for days in the cuttings and hollows just as deep as it does now."

Morrison still demurred. "The stoker told me there was a short cut, but said it was not safe to use it."

"No more it was then! The wind would have blown you away like a dried leaf; but you won't understand that a tempest like this sweeps as clean as a new broom; and when once it is over, sensible folks have nothing to do but profit by its work. Now I'm off; get ye something to eat while I am away. Here, Mysie, Maggie, lassies, one of you, come here and attend to the gentleman. I'll give some of the people in the village a hint that they may have visitors before long; I dare say lots of them in the train there will be glad enough to get away when once we have shown them that there is a way."

"You will bring some brandy with you, and any restoratives you are likely to want?"

"Brandy! You Southrons all fly to brandy, where we should just take a pint of whisky."

Morrison liked Dr. Cameron's looks and quick resolute ways, and was thoroughly inclined to trust him. He trusted him still more when, in an incredibly short space of time considering all impediments, he saw him arrive with two men bearing two stout spades and an arm-chair. "That's for your sick ledly," said Dr. Cameron. "We will carry her here like a queen!"

"We shall have to be on our guard," whispered Morrison, "or we shall have the mother taking possession of the chair, instead of the daughter. The mother is, without exception, the most selfish creature I ever saw!"

"We will take care of that; but mind you, I do not

like your going out again—you are not fit for it, and I should not have allowed you to stir if I had not been forced. I know my way to Macgillivray's Gap well enough, but I don't know the young leddy; and as for looking out for one who seems to be ill, there won't be many in the train to-night who will look well. I suppose," he added with a smile, "you want me to get this particular one in whom you are interested?"

"Yes, but I never saw her before this evening. She is a perfect stranger to me."

"Well, we will take every possible care of her. You have risked your life for her, at all events."

All this was said while they were making their way as best they could to the blocked-up train. Everything was as Dr. Cameron had foretold. Their path now led across what would in daylight have been green fields. Not one vestige of snow was to be seen except in the ditches and hollows. There it was deep enough to take them twice overhead. The wind was slowly dying away, and though from time to time it still blew fiercely, there was a kind of periodicity about its gusts which enabled them to ward off its attacks, and, most important of all now, to save their lanterns. At last Dr. Cameron said, "We are close on the Gap, I think; if so we shall have to use our spades. We must make our way on to the line somewhere where the cutting is low." Morrison was actually seizing on a spade to help, but the doctor very quickly put a stop to that.

They reached the train safely, found the carriage and Olive, though they would have had some difficulty in doing this if they had been without their lanterns, for by this time the slender allowance of oil in the lamps in the carriages was quite exhausted, and all was dark. She was perfectly conscious now, but very weak and ill. Almost every one in the train joyfully snatched at this chance of escape from imprisonment, and large was the procession which returned to the village.

It was several days before Olive was well enough to be moved from Dr. Cameron's house. Of all those who had

suffered, she was the last to recover and be taken home. When the time for departure drew near, she said to Lady Brooke, "We shall pass very near Austerfield; will you leave me there for a month with my Aunt Lettice? I should very much like to go to her."

"Oh, no, it is not at all a nice place for you. You must come with me to London."

"Oh, do let me stay there. Once, I know, Uncle Richard thought it was not well for me to be at Austerfield; but he need have no fear of leaving me there now—I am older and wiser."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Full many a shaft at random sent
Finds mark the archer little meant.

IN the western and north-western districts of London, house after house may be seen which must by its deviation from regularity and convention drive the Board of Works to despair. Corners jut out where no corners should be, queer-shaped windows trespass on the roofs, and long slits of windows, closely shuttered, baffle all conjecture as to their use, until you discover that you are in an artist's quarter, and that the big windows are to give them light to paint their pictures, and the slits are used to send forth into the world canvases too large for any ordinary mode of egress, windows of the latter kind never being opened except on "sending-in day," when the work of the year is carted away to judgment. Of late, artist's houses have become as much show places as old Italian palaces, each painter setting the seal of his individual taste on all about him; and in many cases their rooms are perfect storehouses of treasures brought back from distant sketching-grounds. William Morrison's studio in Chaucer Street was not by any means luxurious or magnificent—he belonged to the despised branch of the profession—but still it was very pretty, though he himself was in the habit of

regarding it only as a suitable background to pictures whose color-composition demanded the utmost harmony both in the artist's mind and surroundings. The walls were hung with some quiet-looking, faded old Italian tapestry, and the floor was covered with a very pretty Persian carpet. There was not a great deal of furniture in the room, but there were a large number of the water-bottles of other countries — the long-necked, stout-bodied, red, green, and yellow pitchers which, having gone to fountains in other lands for many and many a year without being broken, have at last come here to supply a number of houses with a touch of picturesqueness. Liber proofs, Turner engravings, and Méryon etchings hung about, or lay about waiting till some one had time to find a place for them; but except for these, and for a few other things, and two or three comfortable chairs and a sofa, the room was a work-place, and every corner a labyrinth of half-finished pictures, picture-frames, and easels.

Morrison himself was hard at work getting some water-color drawings ready for a winter exhibition, and a splendid tabby cat, which was a great favorite of his, was sitting on the table by him, blinking affectionately, as he dipped his brush in the colors, and occasionally putting out a soft tentative paw to play with it. She was perfectly aware when he brought out a new drawing to work on, and always stood up with a Moorish-arch-like stretch to look at it, then having given her sanction to the undertaking, she sat down again in sleek, velvety beauty, until once more disturbed by some novelty. He talked a great deal to her, and for the most part she listened with pleased attention, only opening and shutting her eyes to show good-will and companionship; but when he put a tone of extra urgency into his speeches, she made the round of his table with her tail up, rubbing herself against his drawing-board as she passed it, and then dropped down again into her old place.

"Botheration! Puss! Who is that?" cried he, as he heard a loud peal at the bell. Puss jerked up her ears, but did not seem able to answer otherwise.

"Mr. Ambergreen wishes to see you, sir—only for a

moment, on business," added the servant, seeing Morrison's look of impatience. Ambergreen was a man to whom it was more troublesome to say no than yes, so Morrison uttered a discontented, "Let him come in."

"I only came to ask you a few questions, my dear Morrison," said he. "I know you are busy, but you won't mind me, I am sure. Go on with your work, please, just as if I were not here." That was much more easily said than done, and Ambergreen himself was a man who could not have painted a stroke if any one was with him, to save his life.

"I am going to send in for competition to the Old Water Color Society. Tell me what one has to do to get elected—or does one do anything? Will they elect me on my reputation? That would be the best way."

Never perhaps in Morrison's life had he opened his eyes so wide as he did now. "But you don't paint in water-colors!" cried he.

"No, but I am going to—the election is not till spring. There is plenty of time before it comes off; only, you must tell me what steps to take."

"Send in three very good drawings, framed close."

"Never mind about the frames—"

"No; if you have never painted water-colors before, I do not think that the frames will be the great difficulty," said Morrison, laughing good-naturedly.

"You may laugh, but I'll do it. I am an oil painter, of course, but what does the medium signify? A man who can paint in oils can paint in water-colors; but you are sure that they will expect me to send in?—they ought to know my work very well—do you really think it is necessary?"

"Yes, indeed I do. Why, they might elect you on your merit, and you might yourself be placed in the difficulty—might discover that water-colors were not your *forte*, I mean."

"Oh, there is no chance of that,—I must do some. Mordew is always asking me for water-colors; he says he could place everything I did, if I would only let him have

a lot. Besides, look what a bother oil-colors and canvases are in the country, when you are doing landscape."

"Landscape!" exclaimed Morrison; "but you never paint landscape."

"Not paint landscape! What do you call that acre of mud that I put my last saint up to the waist in? You fellows are so abominably cheeky about your poor little mixtures of mist and mountain, and your precious passages of mystery. When I paint anything, I like every one to know what it is. It did a lot of people who always go off to German baths no end of good to look at my mud."

"Well, but the chief interest of your picture—the point and poetry of it, I mean—did not lie in the mud."

"Eh, I am not so sure of that. But I have painted three things that you would call landscapes, while you have been away, and sold them too. It's queer what a fancy the public has for pictures of that kind; have them they will; but that's not why I have been doing them. I don't care a rush for the public; I paint landscape because I consider a man is only half an artist who can't paint all round."

"Paint all round if less won't satisfy you, but it will take you some time to learn your facts—a lifetime, I should say, for a very small group of them. It's not so easy as you seem to think, by a long way."

"Well, I won't say it is easy, at any rate not before you; but I'll be hanged if I can see how any one who has been trained to draw the figure, and has had to use his brains to invent figure-subjects, can find any difficulty in sitting down and painting a landscape. What have you to do but paint it? There it is, all ready for you—you have not got to imagine anything. Ideas are not wanted, we all know."

"If you could but know what awful nonsense you are talking!" cried Morrison.

"No, I am not; you may not be such a stickler for the real thing, and nothing but the real thing, as some are, but I am sure I have heard you say often enough that Nature wants no improving that we can give her, and I can see any amount of landscape men nowadays working on

regular Ordnance-surveyor's principles of industry and accuracy; so, where are you to slip in your ideas if you have them? I like an artist who practices every kind of art. Brixton is a man of that sort—you know him. Last Monday I went in, and he was japanning his grandmother's tea-caddy; to-day he was painting away like a dragon at his 'Lifting the Veil of the Infinite.'"

Morrison shrugged his shoulders, and said that he himself feared that he would find life too short to do even one thing well.

"Nonsense! Read the lives of the old masters; they knew best. Everything that could be done by tools was done by them, from chasing a little cup to carving a great statue.

"All right! If you take the old masters for your guides, you had better paint your landscapes according to Botticelli's notions, and then you'll produce them fast enough."

"I don't remember what that glorious old fellow said on the subject," replied Ambergreen. "Tell me."

"He says that if you throw a sponge filled with several different colors against a wall, you will find that the stain it makes will be a very fair landscape."

"That sounds absurd, of course, to you, but I dare say there is a great deal of truth in it. However, I am going to set to work in the regular, lawful, and approved way, and we shall see how I succeed."

"Try it," said Morrison gayly. "I'm sure I don't want to hinder any one doing what he thinks he can do well; but you never seem to think that clouds and trees and mountains require as much knowledge as figures do, and that each is a study by itself."

"That's what you landscape men all say; but I am quite sure that after a man has gone through the training that I have, he can paint anything."

"He can paint mountains, and skies, and waterfalls, no doubt, and never know how ill he has done them. The chances are that he will sin against some law in every inch of canvas he covers, and produce a work as ridiculous to any one who knows anything about it as a figure picture

would be in which the artist had painted people's mouths in the center of their foreheads."

"Well, come and gridiron me when the thing is done. Here is some one coming to disturb you. I don't call it at all fair of people to come and use a painter's time by daylight when there is so little of it. But they will do it, and it is very selfish. Oh, it is Mr. Ardrossan!"

"How do you do, Ambergreen?" said that gentleman; "how are you, Morrison? I have just returned from Scotland, and am happy to tell you that I had a better journey home than you had. You really had a terrible experience!"

"Morrison is just the kind of fellow who would be delighted with such an experience," exclaimed Ambergreen; "he likes study, and seems to be able to get it out of things which would kill most people. He stayed at St. Hilda's, a horrible fishing-place, last winter, hoping to see storms, and wrecks, and horrors of that kind, and gave his landlord a standing order to telegraph to him whenever a hurricane was expected. Such a fellow does not deserve to rest quietly in a good bed; he ought to pass the winter lashed to the mast of a Greenland whaler."

"Thank you," said Morrison. "Ambergreen and I, Mr. Ardrossan, have very different notions of what imagination means. He won't call anything imaginative which gives us the life of to-day in its full vividness—in its ugliness if you like, only conquering that ugliness by beauty of art. If he paints figures, he despises mere men and women, and has to go back to early times for saints, or savage kings and queens; and when he paints his landscapes, he will be sure to put nymphs and goblins in them. Now, to my mind, imaginative work consists, not in altering or forsaking the thing that is, but in giving its full character, with the artist's strong feeling of sympathy and beauty super—"

"Oh, do have mercy!" cried Ambergreen; "I'll run away if you talk in that way. I like to feel on what kind of ground I am standing, and I never do when conversation soars so. I was once waltzing with a lady at a ball,

and what do you think she said when we stopped to take breath?—"Mr. Ambergreen, pray tell me what you think about the human mind." I was more out of breath with that than with the dancing."

"By the by, Morrison," exclaimed Mr. Ardrossan, who was tired of Ambergreen, "I hope you are no worse for that terrible adventure of yours. Were you long in recovering your voice?"

"Oh, no—a day or so. I should have got it back sooner, I dare say, if I could have stayed at Auchterlundie; but the place was filled up with ladies, and all the men had to go to the nearest town—not that night, of course, but next day."

"Wasn't it, hard?" cried Ambergreen. "My poor friend here risked his life for a pretty lady, and never saw her again!"

"Risked my life?" cried Morrison; "I don't know that it amounted to that; had a disagreeable walk, you mean, just as the guard had, and he came safely through; and as for the lady, she was not much to look at, poor thing, by the time we got her to Auchterlundie, nor her mother either—not that I pitied *her*."

"Morrison!" cried Ambergreen, "you are a queer fellow, you really are! He nearly loses his life for a girl, and then he comes away by the next train without so much as getting to know her name! Now, I should expect all kinds of things to spring out of such an adventure as that."

"Oh, no; her name is of no consequence to me; and how could I get to know it? Neither she nor her mother could speak when I last saw them. I mean, not unless it was absolutely necessary; besides, I think I very likely could hear all about her by giving Mr. Ardrossan a little trouble."

"But what can I do?" said Mr. Ardrossan, roused from the study of a drawing to which he had abandoned himself.

"This lady—I believe under less trying circumstances she would have been very pretty—had just been to Glen

Duich to see your pictures. She said you had shown her that thing you have of mine. She was quite young, rather tall, had dark hair and—

"Had she seen them just before the snow-storm?"

"Only just before—she said so."

"Then, it was Miss Brooke! How strange I never heard she had been in the train!"

"Miss Brooke! Not Miss Olive Brooke?" cried Morrison; "and yet I do think it was!"

"Of course it was. She was very beautiful?"

"So far as I could judge, she was."

"Yes, you must have met Miss Brooke. She came to Glen Duich with the Ellertons. She was delighted with your picture, and asked numbers of questions about you. She stood over that sketch of yours, and looked quite overcome by it." Morrison was so amazed at his own stupidity, that he could not speak. How could he have failed to recognize her? not by her face, for the bad light would account for his not doing that, even if ten years had not changed her; but he might have known who she was by the questions she had asked, and the interest she had shown. But not knowing her was a trifle compared with having said foolish and unkind things to her!

"You amaze me," he said. "That Miss Brooke, and I did not know her! She and I were friends years ago. I don't know what I shall do. I said things to her which she will never forgive! Are you likely to see her?"

"I'll go and see her for you," cried the irrepressible Ambergreen, interrupting. "Tell me what you want said to her, and I'll say it. I know her very well indeed. Didn't I paint her as Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, with six penny-buns in her pinafore?"

"Ambergreen, I do wish you would hold your tongue!" exclaimed Morrison, between laughter and vexation.

But Ambergreen never cared to do what any one wished but himself, and continued: "Yes, I did; I married her to old Hopwood. He bought the picture while I was painting it, so I made him sit for the King—people do think such a great deal of the pictures you paint for them when

their own abominable faces appear in them! Good morning, Morrison. Good morning, Mr. Ardrossan."

"Good morning," said Mr. Ardrossan. "I wonder you are not afraid to let me so much behind the scenes. When you propose to put me in a picture, I shall know what you mean."

"No, indeed you won't!" cried Ambergreen gayly and by no means disconcerted. "I'd give anything for you in the picture I am doing now. I am painting Sir Percival just catching a glimpse of the Holy Grail, and I do not know any one in London who has such a face for Sir Percival as you. You see, I want the extremity of refinement and earnestness, and the two don't seem to go together in these days. Good morning to you both. Good morning."

His departure was a visible relief to Mr. Ardrossan, who said: "The secret of true happiness, according to some folks, consists in having nothing on your mind and nothing in it. If that's true, Mr. Ambergreen ought to be a happy fellow. But what a man to paint such a subject! Now that he has gone, let me have the pleasure of seeing my picture—that is, if you have done anything to it."

"Very little. I have laid it in on the canvas. You can get an idea of the composition, but that's all. I can't get on with anything till these things are out of the way. I wish to goodness there were no exhibitions! This working against time is the ruin of all art!"

They went to the canvas on which the ground-colors of the lime-tree picture were carefully laid in, and as Morrison looked at it, he thought, not of the little child of other days, but of the pale, unhappy girl whose seeking after sympathy and friendship he had so mercilessly repelled. What insults he had heaped on her, and how patiently she had borne them!

"I like the suggestion of the picture immensely," said Mr. Ardrossan. "The design is simple, but remarkably original, and the color promises to be superb. You will make a magnificent thing of it, I can see."

"I don't know—I begin to be afraid—I shall never—"

"My dear fellow, what can you find to be afraid of?"

"Of not being able to finish it with as much pleasure as I had in beginning it. I may as well confess—in fact, I am horribly vexed with myself, now that I know the lady of the snow-storm was Miss Brooke! Is it not strange? I used to play with her when we were both children, and this field with the lime-tree was our trysting-place!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Ardrossan, wondering why Miss Brooke had been so silent on the subject of this acquaintance.

"Yes; it was long ago, of course, and we have entirely lost sight of each other; but the recollection was pleasant and very vivid, just the thing to help me in painting a picture."

"Well; when you did meet again, the circumstances were romantic enough, surely? You had the opportunity of showing yourself a hero, and used it splendidly—you were in luck's way altogether."

"The luck was very perverse, then; she knew me, was willing to be friends again, and was leading me to talk of our old acquaintance, and I—you will hardly believe it—was so stupid as not to recognize her, if only by what she said, and, unless I am dreaming it, insulted her by speaking of her as a person whom I never wished to see again, and of her family as disreputable."

Mr. Ardrossan's face wore a look of puzzled sympathy. He credited Morrison with a spark of genius, and watched him very kindly: the snow-storm, he thought, must have been a very exciting time.

"Why on earth should you not wish to see her again?"

"Because I was a fool! I was afraid I should not like her as I used to do—that's all. I heard she was very much changed, and I did not wish to have my early dreams interfered with. She used to be the cleverest, simplest, loveliest little maiden that ever stepped!"

"I don't know what she used to be," said Mr. Ardrossan, "and I don't wonder at your being anxious to keep

such an image unchanged; but I assure you, most people find her very charming now—I do. She was bright, ready-witted, wonderfully interested in all she saw, especially in your pictures, my good sir; thoughtful, modest, and unselfish."

"Yes, she was unselfish; I was struck by that in the snow-storm. But, confound it, I was an idiotic prig! Still, I never dreamt I was talking to the lady herself; and then she was determined to draw me out; so I went on without the least idea that anything depended on my words."

"But you don't tell me how you happened to have this strong feeling against knowing her."

"Oh, I looked on her as a mere worldly fine lady. Two or three of my friends used to meet her sometimes, and I was savage with things I heard them say of her. For one thing, Willoughby was engaged to dance with her at some ball, and she threw him over for the sake of a man with a title, telling a few falsehoods as she did so, with an ease that was overwhelming. So Willoughby said, and then I believed it, and was disgusted; but now that I have seen her, I know he must have made some mistake."

"Of course he must! Falsehood is not in her, and as for passing her life in gayety and worldliness, you forget that she probably has no choice in the matter."

"I know—of course she has not—but I had heard such stories! There was one about her going to Epsom with a lot of women who had been divorced. That, luckily, was a thing I could not speak of to her—but I know now that it was not her fault, if she did go."

"Certainly not! you may take my word for that! She has a mother, and a stepmother, and a great many aunts, but every one of them is minus either a heart or a head."

Morrison shrugged his shoulders. He knew Mrs. Brooke, who had no head—he had seen Lady Brooke, who was certainly without a heart. "I do not so much mind having told her that I knew I should not like her, for if I met her again I could easily counteract that by

letting her see that I did; but how can she ever forgive me for saying that her relations were disreputable?"

"It was a pity you said that! It's so painfully true! You referred, of course, to the sad story that we all know?"

"The sad story we all know'? What do you mean? I referred to no particular story—I know of none. I was only thinking of her uncle Vincent Raymond, and those disreputable sons of his. You can't go anywhere without hearing stories of them."

"Do you know that Sir Chesterfield Brooke's first wife was divorced; the present Lady Brooke is not Miss Brooke's mother. I can't remember the story, but it was a bad one on both sides. They are disreputable enough in all conscience!"

Morrison's distress was increased a hundred-fold by this! It seemed such a wretched thing to have embittered the life of a poor girl who was unhappy already. "And the worst is," said he, "that there is no recalling such a speech as that, and no apology can be offered."

"Write to her," said his friend; "write to her and apologize generally. I will speak to her, too, if I have an opportunity. I should like to bring you two together again pleasantly; besides, I want my picture."

The only composition done in Morrison's studio after Mr. Ardrossan left was a letter to Miss Brooke, which was written again and again, and did not turn out well after all. It was so difficult to be neither too familiar nor too distant. This is what was finally dispatched:—

DEAR MISS BROOKE,—I have only just learnt from my kind friend Mr. Ardrossan that some weeks ago a happiness was within my reach which I have longed for for years, and that, just as it might have been mine, I lost it by talking a great deal of folly. I don't know how I could have been so stupid, and so untrue to my real self, for with all my heart I have always desired to see you again. I do not expect ever to do so, for our lives are passed in very different ways; but I wish to tell you, if you will for once allow me to speak so, that whenever I think of you it is with the deepest respect and regard, and that, from all I saw of you on the very trying occasion to which I refer, I am convinced that, were I once more to come within the

range of your influence, it would be as much a boon to me as of old. Even as it is, you have done me good, for I cannot but remember and admire your gentle patience with my vain, petulant, and most unkind and untrue speeches about yourself. I humbly beg your pardon. I assure you of my most respectful admiration and regard, and, though I shall probably never see you, I beg you to believe that you have no truer friend than myself. If hereafter at any time I can serve you, I beg you to look on me as your devoted and faithful servant, and to command me at your wish.

WILLIAM KEITHLEY MORRISON.

CHAPTER XXIV.

To make a sweet lady sad, is a sour offense.

Troilus and Cressida.

IT was nearly a fortnight before Morrison received any answer to his letter to Miss Brooke, and then it was only a short note, written in a hand which showed that she was ill. This is what she said to him:—

DEAR MR. MORRISON,—Thank you for the kindness which prompted your letter to me. I will not deny that your words pained me terribly at the time, but they were all true. I might say that I am not quite so free to choose how my days shall be spent as I was long ago when I knew you, but that only partly excuses me. I will not say more than that it is perhaps not quite easy for you to judge me. Good-by. For the sake of old times, I beg you to think a little more kindly of me, and not to distress yourself by imagining that you have hurt me, for I shall try to be the better for your words, and to forget their apparent unkindness. Indeed, I forgive you.—I remain your faithful friend,

OLIVE BROOKE.

This letter made Morrison still more uncomfortable than he had been before. He wrote again but received no answer. Day after day passed, and each added to his vexation. He could not settle to his work as he wished, for he was tormented by the feeling that he had behaved shamefully to one who had always shown him kindness. That speech about her family haunted him—it was so cruel and so unnecessary; so unfortunate too, for this, his

sharpest arrow, was one which he had used in ignorance. What was this story? He was too little in society to know the disagreeable histories with which some of the handsome well-dressed ladies and gentlemen who are its brightest ornaments are dogged and weighted. The story about Olive's mother might even be a hundred times worse than he imagined it to be, and the cruelty of his words thus a hundred times greater. He wished he knew it. The feeling of uncertainty as to the magnitude of his offense was most uncomfortable—altogether, he was in such a state of disquietude that he could settle to nothing, and he thought he would go and talk to Ambergreen. He did not like Ambergreen to speak of Olive, but he had no other means of information at his disposal, and the sooner he knew the worst the better.

Ambergreen lived in Kensington. His house was a work of art from the attic to the cellars—even the color of the bricks of which it was built had been carefully selected by the artist, and not so much as a nail was ever knocked into the walls without his personal supervision. Each room was a study in itself, and was fitted up so as to serve as one of a series of backgrounds for forth-coming pictures. Morrison was shown into a mediæval dining-room, with a large oak table whose surface was always well scrubbed with sand. The floor was strewn with rushes; a wood fire was burning on the hearth, and some ungainly seats were set in a wide chimney-corner, on one of which he sat down, and soon he was so absorbed in his thoughts that he forgot how long he was kept waiting. Presently Ambergreen ran in, palette in hand. He had been painting Mrs. Bertie Warrington as Titania.

"But your landscapes!" cried Morrison, when he heard this.

"Oh, her portrait will be a landscape," said he. "There will be a jungle of flowering shrubs and things behind her, and she will have to sit on a bank."

"That is one of the very things I quarrel with you figure-men most about. You paint a lot of figures, and fill up three-quarters of your canvas with them, and then you put

an out-of-door background, and think you have done a landscape ! ”

“ Oh, I’ll do some landscapes with nothing approaching to human interest in them,—with nothing living at all in them bigger than a blackbird. I must, for Mrs. Warrington’s husband has given me a commission for one this very morning. Come and tell me if you think I shall make a good thing of her. Be quick, for another beauty will be here in twenty minutes, so we have no time to spare ! I must shove Mrs. Warrington’s face out of sight, or the other poor lady won’t do herself justice. It is such fun to see how jealous they are of each other ! I stir each of them up to look bright, by subtly well-placed anecdotes against the other.”

“ You said you had painted Miss Olive Brooke ? ”

“ Yes, young man; and if you had had a proper acquaintance with British Art, you would not have got into such a mess as you have ! You ought to have known my picture, and then, when you met the lady herself, you would have behaved yourself better.”

“ Very true; but I was not in London. Of course I should have known it if I had been here. What did you think of her ? ”

“ She was a nice, sharp, jolly little girl, with lots of fun in her, and such a face ! I did not make half so much of her as I ought to have done, for a novelist aunt was sitting over us all the time I was painting, and she was bent on putting me in a book; so I was in a perpetual fever, and afraid to open my lips.”

“ I want you to tell me the story about Sir Chesterfield Brooke and his wife—can you remember it ? ”

Ambergreen put his head on one side and tried to think, looking as he did so more like a wicked bird than anything else, but he did not seem able to recall it. “ I forget,” said he. “ One story of that kind drives another out, and there are such a lot of them. I heard such an amusing one last night—I’ll tell it to you.”

“ Oh, no; tell me the one I want—that’s quite enough.”

“ Let me see, Chesterfield Brooke—he is rather a bad

lot himself—married a Miss Ainsley, one of the Norfolk Ainsleys. She did not really care for him, I believe—yes, now I know she didn't—I've got the story—but her father talked her into it, drove her into it, in fact—he was afraid she was going to marry some poor fellow without a sixpence. Things went on well enough for a year or two, though I don't believe she ever pretended to care for Chesterfield Brooke—then they found that she was encouraging this old lover of hers to come about her, and meeting him in the park, and all kinds of places. She even went to his rooms; so Sir Chesterfield—he was Captain Brooke then—got his divorce easily enough, and married very soon after; that was partly what made the thing so hard for the poor woman, for he seemed to have his second wife ready before he got rid of his first. Still, when a man gets a wife like that, there's nothing for it but the Divorce Court—and by the by, it was worse than I have said—I was forgetting. Her brother shot himself, and she went mad; but Master Chesterfield contented himself with taking another wife—he may have looked on that as an equivalent proceeding. Now, Morrison, I must let my lady come in—an appointment is an appointment! Good-by."

As may be readily conceived, this conversation did not add to Morrison's happiness. He had stabbed the poor girl who was deeply wounded already. He had repelled her friendship, he had apparently twitted her with her mother's disgrace, and he felt wretchedly uncomfortable when he thought of it! All this had come on him because he had talked so imprudently in a railway carriage; but it seemed peculiarly hard that he should suffer thus, for in truth he had only given reins to his tongue because she, whom it seemed so difficult to arouse had been willing, nay, even anxious, to talk on this one subject, and had so often begged him to say more, that he had yielded to please her. He had yielded, but still he had only spoken half the truth to her. He had let her know that he owed a debt of gratitude to this little girl of by-gone days, for awakening the poetic instinct in him, and showing him a way to escape from the common, every-day kind of life

to which circumstances seemed to condemn him. So much had she wrung from him by hard pressure; but he had kept from her that the aim of his life for years had been to educate and raise himself so far above the station in which he was born, that he might hereafter be able to seek in marriage the daughter of a distinguished Indian general without being dismissed with contempt. Up to the age of twenty, this had been his ruling thought. For Olive's sake he had worked like a galley-slave, even at things which he disliked; for her sake he had shunned the thousand and one temptations which beset the path of youth—his worship of her had deprived them of all power of attraction. When he was eighteen, an old family friend had left him a few hundreds of pounds to travel and improve himself, and he had gladly seized on this opportunity of making himself more worthy of her, and had lived and studied in most of the art-capitals of Europe. While abroad, however, he had seen much more of society than he had ever had any chance of doing in England. He had associated with young men of the upper classes, had sat at the feet of worldly dowagers, and had gradually learnt that he was cherishing a dream, and that long before he, a poor unknown art-student, had lifted his head even high enough to win the notice of his own equals, his old love, Olive Brooke—rich, beautiful, and daughter of a governor of a province—would be married to some man so distinguished, that he himself, poor unknown artist that he was, would be ashamed to think of his own presumption in ever having raised his eyes or thoughts to her. She herself had once told him that she would wait quietly in her own home till he came to claim her as his promised wife; but, poor little thing, she was only a child when she talked in that way. She had, however, told him another thing which was most certainly true, that before he did claim her, he must have done something great—"must have some achievements." Those were her words, and he perfectly recognized their significance and truth; and every year showed him more and more clearly how hard it was to do anything that was even good, much less great; and time

was so short, and the great picture—the picture which every one would bow down before, as really good and noble—would not let itself get painted. He came back to England richer in knowledge, but deprived of the strong incentive to work which had never before been absent from his mind. Not, however, till some time afterwards, when he heard of Olive as a Court beauty, wooed and admired by men with titles, and living on the very frothiest surface of London life, did he finally renounce all thought of one day winning her, and even this renunciation was not so painful as the state into which he seemed at last to be driven, of thinking less well of her.

When Olive met him in Scotland, he had for some time ceased to think of her, except as playing a part in his early life, and it is doubtful whether their chance meeting would have materially altered this decision, if he had not spoken to her so cruelly. As it was, his heart was torn with sorrow and vexation whenever he thought of what he had done, and he felt that he could not be happy until he had made some atonement. What was he to do? He had gone to Ambergreen, not quite hoping to hear anything which would lessen his self-reproach, but desirous at all cost to hear the worst; but the worst had far exceeded his worst imaginings. He could not forget her pale suffering face, her timid pleading for his good opinion, and her patient endurance of his scorn. All his old love for her returned, and he felt that he had never really succeeded in banishing it. He did not care to go home—home was only a working-place, and he knew that all painting was out of the question for that day, and perhaps for many more. He was attracted to the quarter where she dwelt. He might see her. It was not very likely, but there was always the chance. He walked once round the square and up and down some of the smaller streets. No one was there whom he cared to see, and the house where she lived looked coldly irresponsible to his eager glance of inquiry. After a little more of this profitless wandering he went into Young Street, and while he was near the General Post Office, a carriage stopped there. Lady Brooke, pretty,

young-looking, and warmly dressed in furs, got out; Olive—he saw that she was there—sat still. Once he thought he would go and speak to her; but she looked so pale and ill, and languid and listless, that he had not the courage to intrude on her. He looked at her for a minute or two, while pretending to be occupied with a new kind of boot-lace, then Lady Brooke came back, and the carriage drove away with her into the square. Even after completing the little purchase which had furnished him with an excuse for going into the shop, Morrison had time to follow quickly enough to see Olive being helped into the house by a maid. So she was ill, and he had had a large share in making her so.

He walked back to Chaucer Street. When he got there, he found that Mr. Ardrossan had been to see him, and had written and left the following note:—

Go out by daylight! I never knew you do such a thing before! I came, my dear Morrison, to ask you to go with me to call on Miss Brooke. I told Lady Brooke yesterday that we should do so, for I made sure of finding you in, and willing to pay this visit with me. Unfortunately, it will now have to be postponed, as I am going into the country until after Christmas. We will make our call as soon as I return.—Your disappointed,
JOHN ARDROSSAN.

Morrison read this with the greatest vexation. “Such is life!” cried he. “I have been running half over London, seeking in vain for what I should have had without an effort if I had but stayed at home! But I’ll have it still!” He rang the bell with such vehemence that his servant was terrified, and ran to see what could have happened.

“Did you hear where Mr. Ardrossan ordered his coachman to go when he left?”

“To Mr. Ambergreen’s, sir.”

“How long is it since he was here?”

“About half an hour.”

Morrison went upstairs, hastily revised his costume, which was of the painter painty, and then ran to the nearest cab-stand, jumped into a hansom, and promised

the man double fare to drive quickly to Ambergreen's. How could he wait until after Christmas to see Olive? He wanted to see her now! By great good fortune, Mr. Ardrossan's carriage was still at Ambergreen's door. Morrison scribbled a few words on a card and sent it in to Mr. Ardrossan, who soon came; and then Morrison, who had such a short while before despaired of ever seeing Olive again, found himself on his way to call on her. Not till he was all but there did he remember his unhappy speech.

"Forget it," said Mr. Ardrossan; "you have apologized generally: behave as if you had never made it. She must be perfectly aware that you would have bitten your tongue off rather than say such a thing if you had known who she was. Here we are!"

How Morrison's heart beat when the door opened which was to reveal her to his sight! She was sitting in a low chair near the fire, and wore a dark crimson dress. The soft lamplight made its rich hues glow, and darkened the shadows of its folds. She was pale, and her eyes looked large and sad. Morrison's quick eye took in all these details at a glance while walking across the room behind Mr. Ardrossan. Lady Brooke had other visitors, who were sipping Mrs. Ullathorne's best tea out of china cups which were so old and valuable that she always kept them in a cabinet. Lady Brooke was delighted to see Mr. Ardrossan, and was profusely civil to Morrison, but that was because he came in such good company. Then it was his turn to speak to Olive. Did she blush a little when she shook hands with him? He did not know; he himself was nervous. She greeted him very quietly, but kindly; still, the few words she said seemed to cost her an effort. Was she too ill to say much, or did she not care to speak to him, or had she not spoken the truth when she said that she had forgiven him? Morrison did not know, and for the moment he was quite confused, for before this visit he had had no idea how exquisitely beautiful she was.

"I am afraid you are still feeling the effects of that terrible night in the train," said he.

She passed her hand slowly across her eyes, as if to hide

her face from him when reminded of anything so painful, and replied, "Oh, no; I soon recovered that. Thank you for all you did for me then."

He wished he had held his tongue; he wanted to say something else, but whatsoever subject he started, languished, after she had replied by a few words. Her hands were lying in her lap; he could not take his eyes off them, for he well remembered that of old he and she had always sat hand in hand. Then, they had always found plenty to say to each other; now, she would not speak and he could not. She felt the conversation was flagging, but what was she to say? She did not like to ask him about his work, lest anything should be said about the lime-tree picture; she could not mention Austerfield, lest she should seem to be reminding him of old times. At last she inquired if he did not know her aunt, Mrs. Brooke, of Harley Street? and he, remembering what he had said about her relations, lost no time in expressing a strong regard for that lady; but that subject would not last forever, and just as he was going to take refuge in the weather, Mr. Ardrossan came to them, and Morrison thought he could not do better than watch how she treated him. She did talk a little more freely to him; but then, she knew him better. Two men with titles were in the room; up to the present time, Lady Brooke had monopolized them; but they preferred the younger lady, and gradually approached her chair. Again Morrison listened and watched. They both paid her a great deal of attention, and the names of great folks and great houses were tossed about with all the lightness and ease of familiarity; but still Olive, though apparently intimate with these two handsome young lordlings, did not seem to treat them with more distinction than she had shown to his humble self. This was, however, small comfort to Morrison, for he felt himself divided from her by walls of brass. His heart began to feel as heavy as lead. He sighed when he thought what a fool he had been, and of the best that it would ever be in his power to give her—to her it would appear the merest discomfort and beggary.

"I think we shall have to run away," said Mr. Ardrossan presently. Morrison rose heavily. He gave Olive one last look, and then they left.

"My dear Morrison," said Mr. Ardrossan, "I am not quite sure that you are the happier for this visit. Are you?"

"At any rate I am the better for it," was Morrison's answer. "I am glad I came, but I must never see her again. I can't stand it."

CHAPTER XXV.

I do see

Danger and disobedience in thine eye.—*King Henry VI.*

A heavy heart bears not a nimble tongue.—*Love's Labor's Lost.*

IT was many weeks after Olive's return to London before she was well; and even when her health was restored, she no longer seemed able to take pleasure in the amusements which she had enjoyed before. Lady Brooke had made a desperate effort to regain her confidence. She had apologized for having so abruptly disclosed the unhappy fact about her mother, and had entreated Olive not to let her uncle and aunt in Harley Street know that she had done so. She had promised them to keep it secret, she said, and they would never forgive her for having broken her word. She had only done so for Olive's good, and they must not know it. Olive would give no promise; she said she required their advice, and must consult them; but Lady Brooke was tolerably easy about the matter, for they were from home, and she felt that Olive was very unlikely to write letters that would distress her uncle, and before they returned she hoped to have brought the girl to her own way of thinking. Dr. and Mrs. Brooke had been in town while she and Olive were in Scotland; but Dr. Brooke's health had again given way, and they had gone to Cannes for a couple of months' change. Lady Brooke was still in Kensington Square; Mrs. Ullathorne had written to announce her desire to return to her own house, and Lady Brooke had not failed to say how delighted she was to hear of

this, and that all should be ready for her; but in her letter she had used these words: "Olive is better, but I am still very anxious about her; no one seems able to say what her illness has been, and is; do not, when you come home, and hear about it, think that she has had a fever, for none of her doctors will admit that this is the case."

As Lady Brooke expected when she penned this absolutely truthful statement—for of course no doctor could admit such a thing for a moment—Mrs. Ullathorne decided on remaining where she was a little longer, and thus Lady Brooke gained more time to dispose of Olive's future. She was beginning to despair of her. She was weary of the girl's companionship, and sick of the sight of her sad face. Olive never spoke except to answer a question—took a book to escape notice, but never turned a page—so far as was possible, avoided all society, and was evidently giving her whole mind to something which she did not wish to confide to her lawful guardian, Lady Brooke. Once or twice that lady said,

"Olive, what is the matter with you? why do you sit and never speak? You never even look up; it is miserable to see you. What can you be thinking of? Tell me; I wish to know."

"I cannot tell you," was Olive's reply. How she wished her dear Uncle Richard was back again, and well enough to talk to her!

"Waiting for an answer, you say?" inquired Olive one day, when a note was brought to her. "Oh, it is from Aunt Selina!" she exclaimed when she saw it. Lady Brooke did not hear her words; she herself had just received some letters which she appeared to consider important. "Aunt Selina is here!" cried Olive; "she has come back ten days before uncle, to get the house ready for him. She wants me to go and spend the rest of the day with her. I am so glad: I want to see her so much."

"You can't go to-day, Olive! You must be at home. Write and say that you will go to-morrow. I have a particular reason for wanting you at home."

"I should so like to go at once."

"No; say you will go to-morrow. I will take you there myself and leave you."

"Please let me go to-day."

"I tell you no, Olive. I have a note which I must answer, and then I will give my reason."

Olive wrote her note of refusal to her aunt, and Lady Brooke wrote a note to some one else, and both were given to the messengers waiting for them, but still Lady Brooke did not fulfill her promise. Then visitors came, and it was not until after six o'clock that they were alone, and she said to Olive, "That note was from Sir John Ellerton. He is in town now. He wrote to ask me if I thought it would be disagreeable to you if he came to pay us a visit, so I have invited him to dine with us to-night. That is why I wished you not to go to Harley Street to-day, for this is the only evening this week I have free."

Olive was mutely indignant. Lady Brooke stood watching the changes in her face. She felt very uneasy at what she read there. "I cannot meet Sir John Ellerton!" cried Olive, at length.

"You shall meet him!—I beg your pardon, Olive, but do please remember that I am much older than you, and know much better what is right in such cases than you can possibly do. Let him come here as usual. He won't say anything which you will object to hear. He has promised me that he will not—he will come just as any other friend might do."

"I will not see him," said Olive. "If I do, everything will happen exactly as it happened before! He will assume that, as I make no objection to his coming here, I mean to accept him in the end, and you will, of course, say that my conduct implied it."

"Olive, no; you do not listen to what I say. I tell you he comes as a friend, and only as a friend—after his hospitality to us, I do not see how we could refuse to let him do that. No; he must come, and you must see him. He will be here in three-quarters of an hour. Go and dress. Don't say anything more. While you are with me, I expect to be obeyed."

Olive walked across the room with a half-formed project of rebellion in her head. She went to her own room and began to dress as rapidly as she could. She chose the plainest and darkest dress she had. Hardly had she fastened the last button of this, than, clad in a warm dressing-gown, Lady Brooke opened the door. She had misgivings about Olive's obedience, and peeped in to see whether she had to deal with a steadfastly obstinate step-daughter sitting, Cinderella-like, in work-a-day garments, or a brightly appareled damsel willing to be reasonable. "That dress!" cried she, though an evening dress of any kind was a hopeful sign; "you might have treated us to something less dingy! What time is it by your watch?"

"Seven minutes to seven."

"Then you have seven minutes to spare. Change that dress, Olive; I like to see you look nice."

"It will do very well," said Olive.

"Oh, no. He won't be here for seven minutes; you had better change it. Put on a white one. Come, you have as much time as I have—mine is still to put on;" and so saying, Lady Brooke went away.

Olive had expected this visit, and, when once it was over, she did not lose a moment. She was afraid of Lady Brooke—of the maid, of every one, and had no time to lose. She snatched up her hat and a loose fur-cloak, ran down-stairs, put on her hat and cloak just as she got to the house-door, opened it cautiously, for she heard the servants talking in the dining-room, and then hastened to the gate. She arrived there just a moment before Sir John Ellerton's carriage drove up. She saw him spring out as she was hurrying across the square; she ran up Young Street, and did not breathe freely until she found herself in the midst of the crowd of people who were making their way up and down the High Street. She got into a hansom almost immediately, and with all speed drove off to Harley Street, and not till she was well on her way did she remember what an omission she had made in not leaving the traditional note of farewell pinned to her pin-cushion. She resolved to send one of the Harley Street servants

back in the cab to set Lady Brooke's mind at rest. The freshness of the air revived her, the boldness of her own course acted as a stimulant, and she felt happier than she had done for months. "I am quite certain I have done right," thought she. "If I had allowed him to come as usual, what could he have thought but that I meant to change my mind? and, poor fellow, he is far too good for such ill treatment!"

Mrs. Brooke was in her study with "eyes commercing with the skies," and a great heap of manuscript before her. "My darling Olive," said she, "what a pleasant surprise! How are you? But I need not ask—I never saw your dear face look so rosy and pretty: and how I have been worrying myself about you! Thank God, without need, I see!"

Olive's face was flushed with the excitement of her flight from Kensington Square. She looked unusually well and beautiful: no wonder that Mrs. Brooke was reassured. "I am so glad uncle is better," said Olive, forgetting her own troubles.

"He is much better, but the great thing is to keep him so. I am reversing the usual order of things—the nightingale female always comes ten days after the male; but I have come ten days before your uncle, to see that all is comfortable for him, only I have spent four of them on the way."

"But you have been writing all day, aunt!" said Olive in a tone of gentle reproach.

"So I have, but I don't write every day. I was tempted this morning, and yielded—you see, I have some very important work on hand, and the house is so deliciously quiet, now that there is hardly even a servant in it, that I shall never have such a good opportunity of getting on again. I will see about the house to-morrow—I have five days left."

"Let me see that all is got ready," said Olive, who knew that temptation might more than once again prove too strong for her poor aunt.

"Yes, I shall be much obliged if you will; but I want

you to help me in another way. Sit down, Olive dear, close by me; you have come at the very moment I most wanted you."

"And I wanted you!" cried poor distressed Olive. "You must advise and help me, for indeed I need it."

"Indeed I will!" cried Mrs. Brooke; "but before we say another word, just read about half-a-dozen pages of this manuscript for me. I have a most particular reason for wishing you to do so now."

"I came because I wanted to talk to you about something very important. Can you spare a few minutes? I am very unhappy."

"My darling, yes; but I thought we might get done with the manuscript before dinner—I am dining late on purpose—pack it up to-night, and look at it no more.—I know if it is not packed up and sent out of the house, I shall find a hundred things to do to it. It ought to go to Messrs. Chatterley to-night to get it out of my way."

"What is it that you wish me to do?" asked Olive.

"It is a novel for the 'Quixotic Magazine,' and I believe they will take it. It is of great consequence to me that they should, but the worst is that, in order to paint a character really well, I am afraid I have it rather too like your Aunt Ullathorne. I did not intend it to be like her, but somehow it has slipped into being an exact portrait—at least, I am afraid so; but I have a guilty conscience about it. You must please tell me what you think, Olive, for your uncle would be very angry if any one said it was drawn from her. Begin here."

Olive took the manuscript, but soon exclaimed, "Aunt, you can't possibly let this go: 'She was the widow of a wealthy merchant, and the ponderous character of her furniture, and the depth of the pile of her carpets, bore witness to his wealth and her own strong feeling for heaviness.'"

"Well, take a pen and correct as you go along; make him a stockbroker—that's disguise enough."

"Oh, no, I'm afraid it is not."

"But I can't have any very great alterations! Read on."

Olive read on, but soon cried, "I am sure it won't do to leave this; every one will know that you are thinking of poor Aunt Mary: 'She contradicted her fellow-creatures as the only means at her disposal of keeping up a conversation, thus goading friends and enemies alike to renewed speech, which she met by renewed contradiction.'"

"Oh, I really can't take that out!" cried Mrs. Brooke. "It is such a good bit, and so exactly like Aunt Ullathorne!"

"But that is why you really ought to take it out."

"Oh, but it is sure to be just as like a great many other cross old women, and I don't suppose she considers herself contradictory. No; don't let us be so very particular! Read on."

"Then I am quite certain she will recognize this," said Olive, after reading a page or two more. "Aunt Selina! It is impossible to let this go. I don't like it at all."

"But it is so like her!" said Mrs. Brooke.

"It does not seem right to put such things in a book," said Olive. "Don't be vexed with me for saying so."

"It mayn't be quite right," said Mrs. Brooke, "but you must admit that it is very good. That one character quite makes the book; it is splendid. Don't say I must take it out, or you will make me ruin the novel."

Olive was firm.

"It is just the kind of character Mr. Chatterley's reader likes," pleaded Mrs. Brooke. "I must leave it in till he has seen it. Suppose I leave it in for the reader, and modify it as it goes through the press?"

"But things that are left in for a while are apt to be left in altogether; besides, I am very much afraid that softening that character won't do—it ought to be taken out entirely."

"That's quite impossible! That character is the most important one in the book; she does all the mischief in it and brings about all the trouble. I'll do something to make it unlike your Aunt Ullathorne—I promise you."

Dinner was ready, and they rose to go. The talented lady folded up her manuscript and said, "Olive, I know this book is good, and I am unusually hopeful. I am

afraid I shall never be a classic, but I do not see why I may not rise to be a standard author."

"At all events, your books are widely read," said her niece kindly.

"Ah, my dear, that signifies very little, I fear; for, as that naughty uncle of yours says, 'An author must indeed be a great fool who can't find an equal one for a reader.' What is that?" she asked, as a servant gave her some money.

"Change from Martin's bill, ma'am," said the maid, and went.

"Don't you count it?" asked Olive, seeing her aunt tumble the loose silver into her purse.

"Oh, no; I never count the money they bring me; it makes so much unpleasantness if it happens to be wrong." Involuntarily another saying of her Uncle Richard's rushed into Olive's mind: "When the devil wishes to ruin a woman, he puts a pen in her hand." Much suffering had wrung from him this change in the old formula, and she began not to wonder.

"When dinner is over, aunt," she said imploringly, "you will spare me a little time, won't you? I am so miserable!"

This time Mrs. Brooke seemed to understand her appeal, and said, "And have I been making you think of other things when there was something you wished to say? Olive, I am so sorry!"

"After dinner will do," replied Olive; but all through dinner she saw her aunt looking penitent and anxious, and when at last they were alone, Mrs. Brooke said, "Olive, you are ill; I see you are, now that you are not flushed. Do tell me what is the matter."

"I want to come back to you! I love you and uncle, and I can't stay with Lady Brooke."

"Dear child, she is your mother." Mrs. Brooke said this so simply and naturally that Olive almost believed that she did not know otherwise.

"She has told me that she is not! She has told me most dreadful things about my own mother. She says I

am disgraced by belonging to her, and must marry some one to hide my real name; so she is trying to make me marry Sir John Ellerton, whether I wish it or not. I am here now against her will; she said I was not to come; that was why I wrote that excuse you got. I came away in spite of her, because I found that she had invited Sir John to dinner."

"I am very glad you did, darling," said Mrs. Brooke, without the slightest hesitation. "You did quite right, and, what is more, you shall stay here altogether, now that you have come! You shall not go back to her to be ill-treated!"

"You are sure I may come?" said Olive faintly.

"How can you ask such a question? Your uncle and I both look on you as our own dear child."

Olive burst into tears. She was so unused to kindness and affection, and had for so long looked on herself as an outcast and a disgrace to all connected with her, that a few loving words quite overcame her. "Oh, but I must not come here," she sobbed. "She told me that my being with you dragged you down, that you kept your own children away from home lest they should be partakers in my disgrace, that I had no real home anywhere, and that no one looked on me as anything but a burden."

"God forgive her!" ejaculated Mrs. Brooke. "She is a very wicked woman! You shall never be with her again."

These few words soothed Olive inexpressibly. "I can bear anything now," said she. "It was the feeling that there was not a house in all the world where I was not unwelcome, that made me so wretched."

"My poor child!" cried Mrs. Brooke; "and you came here with your heart full of this, and you let me set you down to read my manuscript! What a selfish wretch you must have thought me!—but indeed I did not dream that there was anything serious. Is this what has made you so ill?"

"I think so. I have thought about nothing else since she told me. I feel so wretched about my own mother.

Aunt Selina, I have seen her, and I feel certain she was innocent."

"You have seen her? But I am not sure she is alive."

"Yes; she is alive, and I have seen her. She came one day to the window of our house, and looked in at me—I did not know who she was at the time, but I have been thinking of all these things, and now I know, and long to see her again."

Mrs. Brooke took Olive's hand in hers and said, "Dear child, I am so sorry for you; but please do not let your mind dwell on this."

"But I can't help doing so. The thought is never absent from my mind, and I must think of it even more than I do," continued Olive in great excitement, "for I want to prove her innocence."

"Ah, my darling, this is no subject for you to meddle with! Your step-mother was a very cruel woman to let you know about it."

"Am I to desert my own mother's cause because it will be painful to me to know about it? I should not wish to know about it if I believed her guilty."

"Why do you think her otherwise?"

"I don't think—I know! Her face was enough for me."

Mrs. Brooke shook her head.

"Will you tell me the story, then? I am not a child, and may hear it, and whatever you tell me I shall believe—I should not believe what Lady Brooke said."

"Dear Olive, I do not know the story. It happened before I married your uncle, and he can't bear to talk about it! Once or twice I have asked a question, but he always begs me not to mention it. It must have affected him terribly."

"But if you do not know the story, aunt, why do you shake your head when I say my mother may be innocent?"

"Because I have heard enough to prove that she was not—and she was tried, so it was proved in a court of justice that she was not. Olive dear, it is terrible for you, I know, but you must leave this as it is."

"Leave it as it is!" cried Olive wildly. "I should go mad if I believed as you do!—The only thing which stops my going mad is the hope I have of putting her right again with the world."

"But if you did put her right with the world, dear, I am afraid that you would put a great many other people wrong!"

Olive's eyes filled with tears. She had not thought of that. "May I talk to uncle?"

"Yes, dear, no doubt you may—if it would be any comfort to you to do so, I am sure you may; but please do not say anything to him until he is better."

"And I may stay here?"

"You shall never leave us again."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Olive. "I don't know the story, but whenever I look at Lady Brooke I feel that she betrayed my poor mother! I could read that in both their faces, when I saw them together."

"Olive, you are wrong," said Mrs. Brooke, who, though ignorant of the whole story, knew a little more of it than she would admit to Olive. "Remember, you have nothing whatever to go on but fancies!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

The shame fell long ago,
The sorrow keeps increasing.—ROBERT BROWNING.

OLIVE was up betimes next day. She awoke with a sense of light-heartedness that she had not felt for months. She was once more with her own people—she had slept in her own bed, could see her own little pictures and bits of decorations on the walls as soon as the shutters were opened, and could go to her own drawers and take out familiar old garments left behind her as unsuited for the inspection of the great lady who had so suddenly appeared and claimed her as a daughter. She dressed quickly, and ran down to her uncle's study; the maid was

dusting it when she entered. "This room is ready for the master, Miss Olive, let him come when he will," said the girl; but Olive knew better. No one was so particular as Dr. Brooke about the trifles which made up the sum of all the comfort that he could call his own. She rapidly began to arrange his tables as she knew he liked to have them—books in one place, scissors, penknives, and string in another; and then she made a list of things which were wanting. After which she went through the other rooms, and had set all the work which was really wanted a-going before her aunt came down. A letter from Dr. Brooke was lying on the breakfast-table, and much Olive longed to hear its contents. She ran to meet Mrs. Brooke with it in her hand. "Read it," said she; "never mind me, tell me how uncle is. Aunt, since you said I might come back, I have felt quite a new creature."

But as Mrs. Brooke read the letter, her face fell. She read and re-read, and finally muttered, "It is very strange! This is the most disagreeable coincidence—"

"What is a coincidence?" inquired Olive. "Let us be above coincidences; I hate them!"

"My dear child, how I wish your uncle had not written this letter! It upsets all our nice plans. Listen to what he says. 'I am afraid from dear Olive's letter to you, which came after you left, and which I opened, that she is not happy and wishes to return to us. I long to have her back quite as much as she can long to come; but, Selina, be wise, and do not encourage such a thing if she speaks of it to you. I will tell you why. If I were rich, I would take her back in a moment. If I were even in good health, so as to be sure of being able to work for her, she should come; but as it is, with my health in such an uncertain state that any day may find me unable to maintain even my own wife and children, I must not do Olive such an injury as to take her away from those who are bound to provide for her. If she leaves them to come to us, they will desert her; I shall be expected to provide for her, and, dear Selina, I dare not undertake this charge. Tell Olive what I say, with my love. Ask her to be patient, and to

make the best of things for a while. Assure her that Lady Brooke will neither take her to India when she goes, nor will she stay very long here; so that if she can but bear to remain where she is a very little longer, things will soon return to their old state, without the pain and annoyance of any quarrel between her and her present guardians, who will then hand her over to us as before, but will still feel that she has a claim on them if my health should break down, and she should need their help. Tell her that this is my only reason for wishing her to stay with Lady Brooke now—that I look on her as my own child, and so long as I live, she shall always have a home with me. I wish I were rich enough, or well enough, to be able to write differently. God knows the comfort the child has always been to me, and how I long to have her back again.’”

Olive’s eyes were full of tears; but she was not weeping because of her own disappointment, but because he wrote so kindly about her, and so gloomily about his own health. Mrs. Brooke soon made her see that he wrote thus from an excess of conscientiousness, and then she said, “Aunt, how different you and uncle are from my step-mother, and how delightful it is to be with people whom one can trust! Now, if she had received that letter, she would not have read it aloud to me, but by a hundred artful devices she would have got out of having me with her.”

“Always be straightforward, Olive; half the misery of this world would be spared, if people would but behave honestly.”

“Yes,” said Olive; “I believe myself I should get on far better with my step-mother if I acted more for myself and did not let her meddle so much; I think I will take a stronger line.”

Dr. Brooke’s kind letter made Olive feel that she could bear anything. She would go back to Kensington Square and stay with Lady Brooke until she went back to India. She could do that cheerfully, and more too, if her uncle wished it. So, to Mrs. Brooke’s surprise, her tears ceased to fall. She was helpful and even gay, and after a final survey of the rooms to see if anything was wanted which

her aunt was likely to forget, she made ready to go. "Good-by, aunt," said she. "Tell uncle how thankful I am to him, and promise me not to forget to take out all the Aunt-Ullathorny bits."

"I promise," replied Mrs. Brooke sadly; "but what a pity it does seem! You might just as well make me promise to have half a dozen good double-teeth pulled out! Good-by."

The pleasure of being in Harley Street again, and of working for her uncle, had so filled Olive's mind, that not until she was nearly in Kensington Square did she remember that she had left it the night before without much ceremony of leave-taking, and that, in all probability, her reception would not be a very pleasant one. The maid who opened the door pursed up her lips to hide a smile, but could not hide her twinkling eyes.

"Is Lady Brooke in?" asked Olive.

"Yes, Miss Olive; she's in the drawing-room."

Slowly Olive went upstairs, and slowly she opened the drawing-room door. Lady Brooke was, as usual, sitting very near the fire. Her back was turned to the door. Olive stood in some hesitation, wondering what she had better say first. She felt that Lady Brooke must know that she was there, but she did not look round. She was wrapped in a shawl of Lady Ellerton's knitting—Lady Brooke had no fine feelings which would make it unpleasant to wear garments which could not fail to remind her of painful occurrences—her fine feelings all went to securing her own comfort.

"Good morning," said Olive; "I am here."

Lady Brooke turned and looked at her from head to foot with an air of cold but searching interest, and said, "Be so kind, then, as to explain your conduct."

"I went because you invited Sir John Ellerton here to dine. I did not wish to meet him."

"If you are to leave the house in this way whenever my visitors do not happen to please you, I think it is a pity that you did not stay in Harley Street when you were there. You may be able to lord it over your aunt, but I do not

intend to be dictated to by you. I have already posted a letter informing your father of your secret and sudden departure from the house last night without so much as leaving a message for me."

"You have! You will distress him very much!" cried Olive regretfully. "You need not have been quite so quick about it."

"Oh, he expects to be distressed by you."

Olive felt this taunt bitterly. She knew what Lady Brooke meant. Suddenly she remembered her lately-formed resolution of taking a bolder and stronger line, and cried, "I will write to my father myself. I will explain everything to him."

"I forbid you to do anything of the kind," cried Lady Brooke. "I will write to him—he is my husband."

"He is my father," said Olive.

"He wishes to be kind to you and make no difference between you and his other children," replied Lady Brooke, who strongly desired to remind Olive that there was a difference.

Olive winced and said very humbly, "And I wish to obey him in everything I can."

"Are you going to live here, or in Harley Street?"

"Here, unless you prefer to send me to Harley Street."

"But are you to live with me and set me at defiance? What about Sir John Ellerton? Will you see him if I wish it?"

"Yes, if you really wish it."

Lady Brooke looked so surprised that Olive made haste to add, "I must tell you that I shall take the very first opportunity which offers itself to make him thoroughly understand the nature of my feelings towards him."

"I wonder," replied Lady Brooke angrily, "whether the nature of your feelings will change when I tell you of something which has up to the present time been kept from you. You shall hear it; but before I say more you must promise me solemnly not to repeat what I am going to tell you to any one whomsoever."

"I do not wish to hear it," said Olive firmly; "I do not

want to be told anything, unless I may be allowed to consult Uncle Richard about it." She was still adhering to her resolution to be straightforward; this course was entirely in harmony with her own character, and it had the effect of thoroughly disconcerting her step-mother, who tried, however, to put a good face on the matter and said, "Don't be so idiotic, Olive! You get hold of a few fine phrases, and think you settle everything if you only repeat them in an impressive manner! You can't consult your Uncle Richard about what I am going to tell you—not unless you want to kill him, I mean; you know what a precarious state of health he is in. Wait till you hear what it is, and then you won't be so anxious to tell it."

"I don't want to hear it. You have already told me quite enough to make me miserable for the rest of my life! I will hear no more."

"But you can hardly steer your course properly without knowing this! You ought to know it."

"Tell it to me, then."

"Yes; but promise to keep it secret."

"I will not know it on that condition."

"Please yourself!" exclaimed Lady Brooke angrily; "but I am afraid that a time will come when you will have to know it, whether you like or not."

"I will wait until that time comes," said Olive. She was certain that, if Lady Brooke desired to extract a promise from her, it must be one which it would be to her disadvantage to make; so she showed no sign of yielding.

"Then we will speak of something else. You wish to remain here?"

"I wish to do exactly as you and my father like best about that."

"Good girl! Well, we wish you to stay here; but then we wish many other things which you do not seem so ready to perform; however, I will say no more on this subject. Oh, stay! One thing I must say, and that is, that, so long as we remain together, we ought to live on terms of friendliness. Olive, it is not my fault that we seem to live so uncomfortably. I have a great wish to see you

happy, though you don't believe it. Indeed it is true. Think, yourself, how many things there are which I might do which would be pleasanter to me than living here with you. You know I have invitations which I decline. I might go abroad, but I stay here entirely for your sake, because your father wishes you to be taken into society and acknowledged by us."

Olive looked uncomfortable. Lady Brooke continued: "I am sure I do not wish to complain of having to do it; but, Olive, it is not a very agreeable life for me, now that you are so determined to regard me as your enemy."

"I beg your pardon, I am sure," said Olive, who felt rather guilty; "I am sorry if I treat you unkindly."

"Then, be a little different. Believe what I say when I tell you how anxious I am for your happiness. I may not always take the way to secure it that you prefer, but you must own that since I have been with you I have had no other object in view."

Olive began to think that there was a great deal of truth in this, and sat down near Lady Brooke and tried to talk to her as she used to do.

While she was still sitting dressed in her out-door garments, just as she had returned from Harley Street, a letter was brought to her. The address was ill written and blotted, the envelope was sealed with coarse wax. She did not know the handwriting, and uttered some exclamation to that effect as she turned the letter round, and for a minute or two she was so occupied in puzzling herself as to who could be the writer that she never noticed how interested her step-mother was also, or how eagerly Lady Brooke's eyes were fixed on the sheet of paper when once it was drawn from the cover. "What can this be?" cried Olive, reading the first four or five words. Lady Brooke was reading them too. Olive started and looked up, and, though she did not think that Lady Brooke was reading the letter, she thought she was dangerously within reach of it and moved her position a little, and then read, "33 Mulberry Street, Bethnal Green.—If Miss Olive Brooke would like to see some one who can give evidence which will establish her

mother's innocence, she must, on the day she receives this, go—" When Olive had read as far as this she rose to go and finish her letter upstairs.

"Stay where you are, Olive," said Lady Brooke; "I want you here, dear, as soon as you have read that letter."

"I should like to take off my bonnet—"

"No; wait a minute."

Olive felt obliged to stay, but could not resist reading more. "She must, on the day she receives this, go to the Thames Embankment, and be at Cleopatra's Needle precisely as the clock strikes four. There she will soon see a person aged about fifty, dressed in brown merino, with a red petticoat, brown jacket, and a black bonnet trimmed with black and red ribbon, and flowers. This person will have a Bradshaw's Guide in her hand, by which Miss Brooke may know her. Miss Brooke must come alone, also with a Bradshaw's Guide in her hand, to secure recognition; but if she brings a companion with her, her journey will be in vain." Then the writer lapsed into the second person plural. "As, however, you may be afraid of coming so far, or have some difficulty in getting out, I will give you one more chance of meeting me. If you are not able to come to the Embankment by four, come to the Carmelite Church, in Church Street, at eight o'clock. It will be open then, as to-day is Friday. A woman will be kneeling at the right-hand side of the church, at the very end of the third bench from the door. That she may know you, kneel down by her, and put your handkerchief on the desk before you, and lay your gloves cross-wise on it. She will whisper your name to you. Have no fear of her. She will either take you outside or stay in the porch as you wish, and will tell you enough to prove her power of helping you to the knowledge you want. Absolute secrecy is required. Above everything, Lady Brooke must know nothing of this. Perhaps Miss Brooke is not aware what a dangerous woman the so-called Lady Brooke is—the present writer warns Miss Brooke to beware of her. She also begs Miss Brooke not to make any attempt to come to the address given at the top of my letter. Miss Brooke

may write to me at Mulberry Street if she is unable to come to either place, but you must not come to my house. If Miss Brooke neither writes nor comes to one of the places named, the present writer will know that she does not care about the good name or happiness of her ill-used mother.—HANNAH DEANHAM." Olive read this with great but suppressed emotion, and much anxiety to escape observation. Lady Brooke had, however, especially during the last minute or so, seen more than one word which excited her curiosity to its utmost stretch. Fragments of several sentences had met her eyes, and two or three of these had seemed to refer to some appointment for that day, and besides this, other things had struck her. She did not want to interrupt Olive so long as the letter was in her hand, and there was the least chance of seeing more, but when she began to fold it up and put it back into its envelope, Lady Brooke said, "My dear! I wish to see that letter."

Olive shook her head and answered, "Oh, no; I could not show it to any one! I am asked not to do so."

"But I demand to see it! I have your father's authority for treating you as I should treat a child of my own, and I insist on your giving it to me! Olive, it is of no use to refuse, for I tell you I will see it!" and so saying, she rose suddenly in much agitation and excitement. Olive rose too. Was Lady Brooke going to take it from her by force? She feared so; and just as her step-mother was about to clutch it from her grasp, Olive threw the letter into the very center of one of the red-hot fires which Lady Brooke delighted in, and in a second it was beyond the power of any one to read its contents. Lady Brooke turned as white as a sheet with passion, and said, "Olive, you will repent this! Now I know what to think of your professions of obedience! This time you have gone too far!" and so saying, she swept out of the room. She did not appear at luncheon. Olive ate her dismal little meal alone. She did not trouble herself about that, or about having offended Lady Brooke—she was in a fever of excitement to know how to contrive to keep this appointment. If she had

not run away to Harley Street only the day before, she might have gone off without saying anything, but she was afraid of behaving in the same way two days in succession. Lady Brooke, however, seemed determined to give her every facility. A little after two she went out, and Olive, who watched her from the window, saw her walk rapidly out of the square. On this she herself ran upstairs to dress; for, though Lady Brooke was going to dine out that evening alone, it seemed wiser to keep the earlier appointment: besides, by so doing, she left herself one chance more, in case of failure.

She had never been to the Embankment. She fancied that Cleopatra's Needle was somewhere near Westminster Abbey, and, if so, she felt quite able to find her way to it. She would, for the first time in her life, avail herself of the Metropolitan Railway. On her way to her own room, she met Mrs. Ullathorne's rather antiquated housemaid. All the servants liked Olive, but they adored Lady Brooke, who was wise in her generation, and secured her own comfort by gaining their good-will. "Harriet," said Olive, delicately hovering about the subject next her heart, "have you ever been to the British Museum?"

"Yes, miss. We went once, sister and I, and we lost our way in ever so many great passages—what a keeping clean that place must take, to be sure!—and we got to a great round room where hundreds of cross-looking people were sitting reading, which, when we saw it was a studious place, we turned back and went amongst some stuffed beasts—rhinocerhouses and wild elephants."

"And have you been to Westminster Abbey? and Cleopatra's Needle?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Olive, I have, so to speak, seen most things; but I must own that I have only half seen the Needle, for I had most unfortunately left my spectacles at home that day, so I couldn't see to read the inscriptions on it. They do tell me they are very curious."

"Very, I believe," said Olive; "but how did you go to it?"

"By train to Charing Cross, and just walked along the

Embankment. I like the tombs in Westminster Abbey best—it's beautiful to see the great gentlemen all lying there with their hair all in curls!"

Olive had heard enough: she would run to the Metropolitan Station in High Street, and get down to Charing Cross some time before four. What a blessing that Lady Brooke was out! She dressed herself quickly—snatched up the very Bradshaw which had guided her on her Scotch journey, and speedily left the house.

CHAPTER XXVII.

What contrast here!

Repose, and solitude, and healthy ways.—R. BROWNING.

OUR unlucky artist in Chaucer Street was, at the present time, in a state of mind that was anything but favorable to the production of works of art. He was out of love with himself, with pictures, and with everything. What a happy fellow he had thought himself until he learned that the young girl to whom he had been able to render some slight service in that unlooked-for imprisonment at Blair Angus was no other than Olive Brooke! Until the day of that discovery, he had found no difficulty in adhering faithfully to the wise resolutions which he had made while abroad; but it was hard indeed now to acquiesce in the conviction that she could never be more to him than a beautiful remembrance, and that it would be folly to play with the dream of her ever becoming his wife. He had thought, hitherto, that every man who believed himself born to be an artist ought to fix a certain sum as that on which he could live in sufficient comfort to bring out the best that was in him, to strive by all fair means to gain this competence, and that done, to dismiss money-making from his mind forever. What elaborate selfishness all this appeared to him now! No such devotion, even though keeping well on the safe side of martyrdom, would bear thinking of for a moment together with the idea of a

wife born and bred in luxury. It would be impossible to ask such a one to share such a life, and cruel to test the sublime unselfishness of the sex at the expense of his peerless Olive. He could not but take stock of himself, of what he possessed, of what he had done, and of what more he was likely to do. Of his place as a painter he could scarcely judge, even if he had one; but he knew that his balance at the bank was mightily insignificant. At the age of eighteen he had found himself an orphan without a single near relation. His father had made a great sacrifice to give him a good education, and had left him all he had, which was five hundred pounds and not another penny. Three months later, Mr. Keithley had left him five hundred more, with the express condition that he should spend it in travelling and improving himself. He invested the money bequeathed to him by his father in the safe and unfluctuating Funds: this, too, was part of his plan; he would not fret his soul with share-lists, or rises and falls in the market, but would commit his nest-egg of peace to the guardianship of Our Lady of Threadneedle Street. This done, he felt quite rich and moneyed, and, as it seemed to him that this little bit of self-sacrifice was one step towards gaining both his mistresses, he was happy and hopeful. At that time, indeed, his future life seemed to unroll itself in bright colors before him. Painters whose opinion he valued spoke in high terms of his chances of professional distinction. Mr. Keithley's money had provided him with means to travel and see and study and sketch beautiful things of all kinds, without any feeling of culpable self-indulgence or extravagance; when it was all spent, he would come home and work harder than ever. After his return to England he had several successes, was elected associate of the Old Water Color Society, sold some pictures in the R. A., and got some commissions; in fact, was as happy as could possibly be, until he again saw Olive, and again could not help allowing her image to flit before his eyes. It was a pity; but somehow his plans, his theories, his prim mapping out of the future—his little arrangements, so to

speaking, with Fortune—fell to pieces completely; a new planet had swum into his ken; another desire beside that of attaining unknown heights in art, and one inconsistent with it, had taken possession of his mind.

No wonder his painting did not prosper as usual, and that subtleties of color and form, though ever so well planted in his memory, became tangled and confused in his drawing. He thought of Byron's wish to have "something craggy to break his mind upon," which, in his own case, would be a good, solid bit of natural fact to copy to the very life. He threw down his brush and exclaimed, "I'll go into the country at once and forget her!"

"A telegram for you, sir," said his servant, entering in dismay. Morrison read the pink paper, and its message was this: "Gale from the north-east. Heavy sea on outside. Stone seats swept off East Pier. Schooner ashore on Scaur. From Cuthbert Pickering, St. Hilda's, to W. K. Morrison."

"I'll go!" cried Morrison. "I am doing less than nothing here. I told Pickering to telegraph to me whenever there was any chance of a tremendous gale; I'll go at once."

He had brought his portmanteau into the studio, and, having crammed it to the last gasp with painting materials, began to wonder what he was going to do about taking some clothes away with him—he always thought of painting things first. "It won't do to go to St. Hilda's without lots of clothes to get wet in," thought he. "How those waves do come down on one! The nastiest way of looking at a sky that I know, is through a great, dirty, yellow-colored mass of water that is just going to fall on one!"

Having, somehow or other, packed a sufficiency of clothes to get wet in, he drove off to the Great Northern, and arrived there just in time to take his ticket and telegraph to Mrs. Pickering to make ready for him.

"I have done right," said he. "Work out of doors is out of the question, but I'll get some good study at St. Hilda's. If this wind holds, the sea will be magnifi-

cent, and I can't afford to spend my life in pursuing a shadow."

He was determined to drive Olive out of his head. He read all the way down. How cold and wintry the journey was, and how difficult it was not to think of that other railway journey not three months before!

It was midnight before he reached St. Hilda's, and the station was nearly dark; no one was there but two or three officials, and they were only waiting the arrival of this last train to shut the doors and go home to their beds. St. Hilda's was a terminus, and, except during the fishing and bathing seasons, trains were never crowded. When Morrison stepped on the platform, he was met by a friendly cab-driver who was an old acquaintance of his. "I suppose there are not many people here now that the weather is so stormy?" said Morrison.

"Bless you, sir, no! There's not been a job by the mail train for the last month."

Morrison resigned himself to be a "job," and was driven along the quay-side nearly as far as the pier, for on his first visit to St. Hilda's he had chosen Mr. Pickering's lodgings as giving him the best opportunity of studying fishermen and fishing boats, and the splendid old red houses on the opposite side of the harbor, under every varying effect of light and atmosphere. As he drove along by the water's edge, his eyes rested in delight on certain well-remembered landmarks of a place which had a great hold on his regard. There were the lights of the old town, and the larger lamps which marked the line of the long flight of steps to the church at the very top of the wind-swept cliff. The town was lost in rich black shade, but the church above stood out squat and dark against a wild and storm-rent sky. Large clouds were hurrying by, or spreading thin films over a frosty, cold moon. He heard the boom of the sea as it beat against the pier. He felt another man, full of excitement of eye and mind: and when the carriage stopped, if he had not had some regard to the proprieties of life, he would at once have made his way to the end of the pier, to see if he could not get a peep at the wrecked schooner;

but Mr. Pickering was smiling and bowing at the bottom of the steps, and his wife, kindly soul, was smiling from ear to ear at the top, and a great fire was blazing in the sitting-room, and on a footstool in front of it was a tabby cat. Mrs. Pickering showed her to him and said:

"We've setten the poor cat afore t' fire, sir, because that was how you always liked to have her. I reckon she'll remember you. Oh, please, sir, never think nothing of your luggage; our Cuthbert will see to that, won't you, Cuthbert, honey hand, Mr. Merrison, sir, just you sit down and get something to eat while it's warm and comfortable."

It was warm and most comfortable, and Mrs. Pickering brought it herself, and, in the fullness of her joy at having a lodger whom she liked back in her house in the very depth of winter, when no one else "was let," chattered and waited on him at the same time. What a supper she had provided for him! First came a dish of ham and eggs, and then some chops, and after that appeared a chicken roasted to a turn. "I know you like a nice, tender young chicken," said she, "and after that you'll have—"

"Good heavens! Don't kill me, Mrs. Pickering!"

"Kill you, sir—no, Lord love you, I'll not do that, but you are tied to be hungry after your long journey."

"Are there many visitors here?" he asked, by way of a grim joke, for he still heard the great waves crashing down on the east pier, and the wind moaning outside.

"Visitors! Bless you, no, sir! There's not a visitor in the place but you and the family next door."

"It was very good of Mr. Pickering to tell me about the schooner coming ashore. I was determined to set off at once, as soon as I heard it was there."

Mrs. Pickering's face fell. "She has gone clean to pieces, sir; but there's a brig run aground in the harbor—maybe she'll do?"

Maybe, indeed! How Morrison wished for daylight!

Next morning he rose early. The fresh sea air made him feel light and happy, the thought of the view which lay before his windows stimulated him as nothing in London could have done, and he ran to pull up his blind with

much of the joyful flutter of childhood when on the edge of a new delight. St. Hilda's was divided into an old town and a new one, separated by the harbor and river, and connected by a picturesque bridge which was always being opened to let some strange old-fashioned craft pass through. Steep cliffs rose on both sides of the river, and both were densely crowded with fine old red-tiled houses which rose tier above tier from the water's edge to within a few feet of the top. The only difference was that the cliff under which Morrison's small abode nestled was surmounted by rows of modern lodging-houses, on which he was only too glad to turn his back, and that opposite to him was crowned by a magnificent fragment of an abbey, a stately manor-house much of which had been built of stones pilfered from the monastery, and one of the strangest and most picturesque churches in the kingdom. How lovely the sun-tinged smoke from the village chimneys below was, and how exquisitely beautiful the vision of the ruin above, silver-gray in the frosty morning mist! But suddenly he saw another sight which filled him with a still keener delight. The brig which had come ashore, and which he had till this moment forgotten, was lying just under the east cliff—if he had had the arranging of it himself, he could not have put it in any place where it would have come better in a picture which he had long wished to paint of the town from that side of the river. He hurried over his breakfast, for he knew that the brig would not be there long. The storms of the preceding days had cleared the air, the day was bright, and the cold intense. The sea had not yet gone down, and a broad belt of snowy white marked the limit of the dreaded Scaur, as the floor of rock was called which ran out to sea for a good quarter of a mile, on one side of the harbor. All of this was covered now. He made ready to go out; but just as he was taking a last look at the state of the tide, he caught sight of a table which was being placed in the bay window of the next house. It was not so much the table that interested him, as the fact that a glass of pure water was set on it, and this in the month of January seemed to betoken

the neighborhood of a brother artist. "Confound the fellow!" cried he, "he is going to pounce on my brig! Who would have thought of any artist being here in such weather as this?" A drawing-board was then propped up on the table, but the hands which performed that deed seemed to be very small ones. Then came a color-box, and after that the artist sat down; but still Morrison saw nothing but the hands aforesaid and a fragment of wrist and sleeve, but the wrist was a very slender one and the sleeve was of peacock blue! "Some poor girl must be going to make a mess of that subject!" was the thought which ran through the arrogant masculine mind. "Well, she won't find it easy!" As he crossed the road, he cast one upward glance at the sketcher, but he saw nothing but her shining dark hair and patiently bent head, and in another minute the heart-kindling picturesqueness of the scene before him had driven everything else out of his mind.

"How long will that brig be there?" was the question he put to the first sailor he met.

"Not long if they are wise! She'll soon strain herself all to pieces if she stops there. I should think they'll lose no time in getting her cargo off her, and then I make no doubt but she'll float."

"What is her cargo?"

"Wood. She's just come from the Baltic. They'll soon unload her and get her off when the tide flows."

That, as Morrison knew, would be at seven; so he hurried across the bridge to the east or opposite pier, resolved to work till dark. When the sun set, it did so in a flood of orange and crimson which translated the houses before him into a beatific vision.

He was more happy than tongue can tell in doing his best to seize on this bit of heaven-sent beauty, and he walked home in grateful thankfulness.

He had forgotten all about his sister in art; but just as he was about to cross the road to go in, he chanced to look up, and standing at the window of the house next to his was a girl looking out. The room was full of a blaze

of firelight and it illumined her face. It was a very charming face, but it seemed to him that he had seen it before.

"Mrs. Pickering," cried he, for he met her as he went in, "who is the lady who is lodging next door?"

"She is an artist, sir, and a pretty good one by what our Cuthbert tells me, and rely he is a capital judge of what a pictur' ought to be!"

"Do you happen to know her name?"

"Her name is Keithley, sir—Miss Rosamond Keithley. She has been here better than a month with an aunt."

Rosamond Keithley! How strange! That was the name of a niece of his dear old friend. He had seen her once or twice at his house, but he chiefly recollected her as the delighted partaker of a pleasure he always allowed himself when he went there—that of looking over Turner's England and Wales, one of Mr. Keithley's most treasured possessions. "Does she paint, do you say?"

"Almost as hard as you, sir—I am sure, if it was me, I'd tire."

"And is she pretty?"

"She is that pretty, sir, you might take and frame her for a pictur'!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Work apace.

Honest labor bears a lovely face.—DEKKER.

"SHE is that pretty you might take and frame her for a pictur'!" had been Mrs. Pickering's words when speaking of the beautiful young lady who was lodging next door; but Morrison was so full of the beauty of that brig, that he never thought of anything else for a fortnight. He made "our Cuthbert" take down a bed, and thus converted an upstairs bedroom, with a good sky-light, into a very fair studio, and set to work at once to transfer to canvas as much of the charm of the scene which had taken

possession of his mind as he could. He worked from daybreak to dusk, carried on with one burst of enthusiasm, never flagging, and hardly allowing himself time for a breath of air or a mouthful of food. As for Olive, he had no time to think of her, so absorbing in its intensity was his desire to make his own of what he had seen. He never once thought about how he was succeeding—he only knew that he was very happy. From time to time, he ran out to study some detail, and then back to his work, as to the greatest joy the world could give him.

Interruptions were few at St. Hilda's, but in order to have none at all, he had locked his door. Perhaps he was rather afraid of his talkative landlady. One day, however, he heard a knock given with much sacrifice of knuckles, and, looking round, he saw that a note was being pushed under his door. After a while, he condescended to pick it up, not without accompanying the action by one or two remarks not intended for the ear of the public. It was a pretty-looking note enough, and written by a lady. He opened it, not at the moment liking it any the better for that fact.

Mrs. Reuben Keithley presents her compliments to Mr. W. K. Morrison, whose arrival in St. Hilda's has only recently become known to her. As an old friend of her family, Mrs. Keithley hopes Mr. Morrison will call and see her. She herself has not the pleasure of his acquaintance, but her niece well remembers seeing him when she was a child, and on a visit to her late uncle in London. If Mr. Morrison would kindly call about three o'clock to-day, Mrs. Keithley would esteem it a great favor. She is very anxious to have a good professional opinion of her niece's sketches in water-colors. Miss R. Keithley has lately devoted much time to drawing, and her ambition is to make as it were a profession of it. This, however, Mrs. Keithley feels, ought not to be encouraged unless her talent is a very decided one, as otherwise such a decision could only be productive of disappointment.

"One can't escape worry even at a place like this!" cried he, "but I ought to go." He had once or twice already vaguely thought that it was his duty to show some civility to these people next door—that is, if they were related to his Mr. Keithley; but then he was not by any means sure

of this, and did not know how to find out. He scribbled a line to say he would be there at the time named, and then tried to ignore the break in his work.

Mrs. Reuben Keithley was an invalid lady, kind in manner and pleasant of face. Miss Rose was out, of which he was glad, seeing that he had to pronounce an opinion of her work.

"I have not told Rose that I have asked you to come," said Mrs. Keithley; "she is so very anxious to paint, that I should have been afraid to have let you see her sketches in her presence, lest you did not like them."

"Excuse my asking if there is any necessity for her doing work of some kind?"

"Oh dear, no—no necessity at all! She has nothing from her own father; but the Mr. Keithley you knew left her a hundred a year, which is a very tidy little fortune for a girl, and she has a great many kind relations with whom she lives in turn; but they all detest the idea of her meddling with art professionally, and lead her rather a bad life about it. What she wants to know is, whether she has talent enough to justify her in making a strong effort to gain her point."

The drawings were decidedly good for an amateur. Morrison, however, saw some great faults in them, and was honest enough to say so.

"You would be doing my niece a very great kindness if you would repeat all this to her—I am sorry to say that my poor head will never carry a quarter of what you have told me."

"I shall be delighted if I can be of the slightest service to Miss Keithley—I ought to be, I am sure, considering the name she bears."

"Thank you; that's how I said you would feel! She will be here in a minute. The fine day tempted her out, but she has only gone to Rastwick by the cliffs; she went at two, and said that she would walk back by the Scaur."

"The Scaur!" cried Morrison, "I hope not!—how terribly foolish!"

"Foolish! Why?" exclaimed Mrs. Keithley, in great

alarm. "There is no danger, I hope? The tide is all right for her—it won't be high till half past five."

"Yes," said Morrison, bethinking himself, "but it's so dreadfully slippery there!"

"Oh, she won't mind that—she is very sure-footed. She ought to be here soon. Let us see if she is in sight. She said I was to look out of the window and watch her going up the Scaur-ladder, and along the side of the cliff there, at a quarter to four. That's why I asked you to call now, Mr. Morrison: I thought she would just come in at the end of our talk, and hear what you have to tell her about her drawings without the nervousness of being present while you were examining them."

"Her work is beautiful!" cried Morrison; "but I must not stay to see her now—I have an engagement—excuse my going away so suddenly—I must—I'll run in again, if you will allow me." He went away as quickly as he could, for if that poor foolish girl had carried out her intention of going to Rastwick Bay by the cliffs and walking home by the Scaur so as to arrive at the Scaur-ladder at 3.45, the latter part of that plan could assuredly never be carried out by her, for at 3.45 the way which led to the Scaur-ladder would be deep under the water.

The boatman was not in; Morrison ran along the quay hoping to find some sailor, and still thinking and counting up chances all the way as he went. There would be no difficulty in rescuing her if he could but reach her with a boat, but it was now ten minutes to four, and by this time she must, if on the Scaur, be hemmed in by the tide and in an agony of fear. This was the special danger of the Scaur. You were caught in a trap unawares. There was a way down to the shore from the cliff opposite, by what was called the Scaur-ladder—a long flight of steep steps which bridged over the space between the pier and the cliff—and another about a mile and a half farther on, at Rastwick Nab. Both these points, however, jutted into the sea, and both were reached by the tide and deeply covered by it long before the mile and a half of smooth gray flooring which lay between them showed any sign of dan-

ger. None but those familiar with the place could know that all escape by either of these ways would be cut off more than two hours before the tide seemed even to be getting high on the shore between them. How could a stranger know this? Your landlady would tell you that it was dangerous, and you went there and saw a mile or two of this glistening gray expanse stretching away before you, broad, level, and unbroken except by an occasional chasm or ledge in the rock, or tangle of seaweed; and here were fossils, St. Hilda's headless snakes, and brittle belemnites, and pools full of the sea's fallen stars, as the Scotch so prettily call the jelly-fish, and waifs and strays of carnelian and jet—you might spend hours in such a spot and not see half its treasures. But once too late for one place of exit, you were too late for the other also, and between the two was nothing but the greedy sea on the one hand, rushing open-mouthed at its victim; and a range of sea-cliffs which rose perpendicularly to the height of nearly three hundred feet and hemmed you in to your fate.

Morrison thought of all these things till he was sick at heart; and though it was not ten minutes after his abrupt departure from Mrs. Keithley before he had found a man and a coble, he counted the time by hours. The man nodded his head and said there was no time to lose, but that the sea was running rather strong, and he must have his mate with him. Morrison had run along the quayside without seeing a sailor; his newly-found man, David Smales, dived into a house and brought out a dozen directly, and in less than a quarter of an hour after leaving Mrs. Keithley's, Morrison and two of them were pulling hard to the harbor's mouth.

"She will be safe enough for some time to come?" said Morrison interrogatively.

"Yes, and maybe not know she's in any danger," said one of the men. "That's how they are! I've known us men row till we were fairly melted away, and just find the folks we had gone after a-sitting on a rock admiring the fine prospect, or a-picking up pretty shells on the shore, and never thinking how near they was to being drowned."

Outside the harbor it was very rough indeed, and more than once Morrison thought the coble would be dashed against the pier or swamped; but the men well knew how to manage her, and Morrison soon saw that there was no cause for anxiety.

A strip of the Scaur was still uncovered, but it was rapidly becoming narrower—no one was there—at least, Morrison could discover no one, nor could the lynx-eyed sailors. He tried to peer into the clefts and crannies of the great lowering cliffs, but he saw nothing that resembled a figure. The coble was now in smoother water, but great white waves were leaping up against the Scaur-ladder and dashing through the opening beneath it. Perhaps Miss Keithley had changed her mind about walking home this way, and at this very moment was safe and happy in her own home. This was just one of those cases where it had been necessary to act immediately if at all. If he had waited ten minutes more to see if she did not walk leisurely home by the usual every-day path, and she had not appeared, it would then have been too late to go off in search of her.

"I see no one," said Morrison; "she can't have come this way."

The men, too, said they saw no one; but all three resolved that it was necessary to go quite to the extreme end of the Scaur before they could be sure that no one was there. They now pulled a little more slowly, and were able to speak to each other.

Suddenly all three cried out in the same breath, "What is that?" For they had all caught sight of a black something on a rock five or six feet from the ground, which might be a crouching figure. One of the men had a glass in his pocket and bade Morrison take it and look, but the point was otherwise determined, for she—it was a woman—rose to her full height, and waved a white handkerchief. She wore a brown dress, and this had been the means of hiding her from their sight until they got nearer, but how was it that she had not seen them? One of the men answered this question by saying, "Poor thing, she has not

been able to look about her for crying, I reckon ! Well, I'm sure I had made up my mind that she had gone home the other way, and that we'd just had our bit outing all for nothing."

"Row your hardest !" cried Davie. "Don't let us wait till the water's even with the rock, or 'we'll maybe 'be mashed to matchwood in five minutes !"

Morrison, in the presence of these two men who knew how to cope with an enemy of such terrific force, and who did it so quietly, felt himself a poor useless creature. They knew the danger of this expedition a thousand times better than he; but they had calmly accepted the duty of doing their best to save a fellow-creature, and did not make the least merit of it.

"Now, sir," cried one, "I'll jump out and steady the boat a bit, and you'll get out and fetch the lady. Me and my mate must stick by the coble, or we'll lose her. Don't waste one moment you can help."

He did not lose a moment. He ran the twenty yards or so to the cliff where Miss Keithley was. Poor girl, she had climbed up as far as she could, but her farthest was much below high-water level. She was trying to get down to come to him, but was benumbed by cold and fear; for an hour or more she had been perfectly aware that she stood face to face with death. He helped her down; she never spoke. He half dragged her to the coble, which the force of the sea rendered almost unmanageable, and which in unskilled hands must have been stove in by the rocks in a second. He never knew how he got her in. Once inside, she looked up in their faces and said, "Thank you, and thank God !" and then she covered her face with her hands and sobbed convulsively.

Now came the worst struggle of all against the full strength of the incoming tide; but the men prevailed, and bravely fought their way to the harbor mouth. Miss Keithley sat quite still, possibly aware that there was still some slight degree of danger, more probably thinking only of the narrow escape she had had. As for Morrison, danger or no danger, he felt that he could have trusted him-

self anywhere with those two men, whose strong, resolute, hard-set faces delighted him so.

They were close by the landing-stage now, and Morrison was giving his whole mind to steering the boat in with precision. As it glided to its place, he saw Miss Keithley looking uneasily at him. She seemed very ill, her lips were blue, and her face deadly pale. Still, she wanted to say something.

"What is it?" he inquired kindly.

"My aunt," she said faintly; "she is such an invalid. She must not be told about this; help me to keep it from her."

He nodded, admiring her thoughtfulness, and then he began to help her out of the coble.

She turned towards the men, who were rubbing their foreheads with their handkerchiefs and shirt-sleeves, and looked as if she wanted to wait to speak to them.

"Not to-day!" said Morrison; "you shall see them to-morrow; I will take you to see them at their own homes," he added, for he saw that she was not inclined to be hurried away from them now without expressing some part of her gratitude, though she was evidently unequal to any more excitement. "I promise I will take you," he said, and made her go.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Some that smile have in their hearts, I fear,
Millions of mischiefs.—JULIUS CÆSAR.

WE left Olive Brooke on her way to the Metropolitan Railway Station, hurrying with all speed to secure the evidence of a woman who professed to be able to restore her mother's good name. She almost ran when once she had shut the hall door, but scarcely had she got to the top of King Street when she met Lady Brooke, who had in reality been watching the two northern exits from the Square for nearly an hour. She had seen enough of the

letter which Olive had that day received to show her that some meeting was in contemplation which it would be highly imprudent not to put an end to at once. "You here, dear Olive!" said she sadly, as if all feeling with regard to that young lady's recent misdemeanor had departed, except the pain of wounded affection. "Where are you going?"

"Oh, nowhere particular; I just came out," stammered Olive, with very rosy cheeks and much confusion.

"You are quite sure that you had no particular object in coming out?" said Lady Brooke sweetly.

Again Olive stammered—she was not an adept in the art of falsehood. "Quite sure," she said; but she did not look so very sure, after all.

"That's right! Then, if you are quite certain that there is nothing else you wish to do, come with me to a shop round the corner. I was just on my way back to ask you to come and help me to choose some trimming for that old gray dress of mine."

Olive knew now that that very night she must go to the Carmelite Church, in the dark, and quite alone. She had, she feared, lost all chance of keeping the first appointment, and must keep the second. What a blessing that woman—whose name, to her great astonishment, she found that she had already forgotten—had given her this second chance of seeing her! To-night she would have no difficulty in going out. Lady Brooke was to dine in Leinster Square at eight, and Olive would have ample time to get to the Carmelite Church after her departure. Feeling, therefore, easy on this point, she showed no vexation at being thus carried off to a draper's shop, and, when there, threw such an air of heartfelt earnestness and interest into all the questions under consideration, that Lady Brooke began to think that she could not have come out with any other object than that of spending an idle half hour in the open air.

"I declare," cried that lady at length, "we have spent a whole hour in this shop! Do you know, it is actually four o'clock!" Four o'clock, and at this very hour the

writer of that letter was waiting for Olive at the appointed place!

"My head aches!" said Lady Brooke wearily as she walked homewards. "They do keep those shops so hot! I wish I had not come out, it is so horrible to have to sit through a long dinner when one's head aches!"

Olive began to tremble a little lest she should again be disappointed, and said, "It is not far to Leinster Square; that's a good thing, at all events."

"Oh, no, the distance is nothing; besides, I can send you in my place if I feel worse."

"Oh, please don't do that. I couldn't go out alone, and then I have hardly spoken three words to Lady Strathspey in my whole life!"

"It was very rude of her not to invite you, and if I go to-night I intend to make her aware that I think so—I shall be able to do that somehow—but if you did go, you wouldn't have to go alone. Your Uncle and Aunt Raymond are invited, and they said they would call for me at a quarter to eight. How terribly we feel the loss of that carriage!" Lady Brooke had sent back Dr. Brooke's carriage in case Mrs. Brooke wished to use it, and very angry she was at having to give it up.

The moment they were at home, Olive persuaded her step-mother to lie down on the sofa and rest. She did not wish to appear too desirous of getting rid of her, but secretly trembled with anxiety lest she should stay at home. "I'll go and leave you," said she. "If you sleep a while, you will feel better."

"I sleep?" cried Lady Brooke. "I am in too much pain to do that! Don't leave me, dear. I hate being alone when I am ill."

The truth was, she feared to let Olive go out of her sight lest she should steal away to confer with some enemy. Olive felt that she had better stay, so she sat down in a corner out of sight and tried to lay her plans for the evening. Come what might, she was resolved to keep this second appointment. Even if she were sent to dine at Lady Strathspey's in her step-mother's place, she would still keep

it! Lady Brooke lay quietly on the sofa, and from time to time Olive inquired how she felt, and sometimes she felt better and sometimes worse; but when seven o'clock came she said, "I think I'll make an effort to go," and went to her room to dress. Much comforted by this, Olive also went to dress. She would have preferred to make no change in her attire, but dared not depart from any daily custom. In about half an hour, the two ladies came downstairs, together; but just as Olive was about to obey a summons to go and eat her lonely little dinner, rejoicing in the thought that in another quarter of an hour her step-mother would be gone, and that she herself would have nothing to do but throw on her ulster and hat, which were now lying ready in a dark corner of her bedroom, and go too, Lady Brooke said, "After all, Olive, I'm afraid I can't go! The moment I leave the sofa, the pain is as great as ever; besides, it is so absurd to make myself miserable. Every one there would far rather have a nice bright girl like you to look at and talk to, than a headachy old married woman. You go, Olive; you are ready."

"Very well," replied Olive, who knew that it was in vain to resist, and who had devised a bold scheme for the attainment of her wishes; while sitting for two hours by firelight.

"You don't mind going, dear?" inquired Lady Brooke searchingly, for she could not be quite sure that her fugitive glimpses of Hannah Deanham's letter had supplied her with a version that could be absolutely depended on.

"I'd much rather not go," began Olive; but, looking up, she saw that there were no signs of yielding in her step-mother's face, so she most judiciously concluded with, "but of course I'll go with pleasure, if it will save you any pain."

"Thank you. Yes; I really could not bear it."

Under the white cloak which Olive threw over her dress she contrived to secrete a dark one, thin enough to go into a small compass, and then she returned to Lady Brooke, who had once more taken refuge on the sofa, and was too ill to be observant.

"There they are!" cried she presently. "Run down,

Olive, or your Aunt Raymond will get out and begin talking to me and make you all too late."

Olive obeyed with the greatest alacrity, for time was of the greatest importance to her; but as the door of the carriage was shut after her entrance, she screamed loudly, for the man had shut it too quickly, and had pinched her finger. This accident had been of her own contriving. She had made up her mind that it was better to go through life, if need were, with a slightly injured finger, than to fail to do what was of such vital consequence to her own mother. She had played her part thoroughly, and the tip of her finger was so much hurt that she could hardly restrain her tears.

"You had better go back, darling," cried both the Raymonds, in great distress. "You can't possibly appear amongst a number of strangers."

"Oh, I think I can," said Olive, who did not want to go back. "It will be better before we get to Leinster Square. At any rate, I don't like to give in without making an attempt to bear it. Suppose I go as far as Lady Strathspey's house with you; and if my finger is better I'll go in, and if not, your man will be so good as to take me home again."

"Poor child," cried her aunt; "how sorry I am! I can see what pain you are in." For Olive really was suffering sharp pangs, and expressed her anguish by various contortions. You had much better go home! We must take you on with us now, for we are a little late, but don't attempt to go in—go home, dear."

"If you really think I may, aunt—" began Olive.

"Of course you may. It would be absurd to do anything else. Let Robert drive you home, and then send him off at once for a doctor. Or would it not be better if your Uncle Vincent went back with you?" But Olive would not hear of that. No sooner had the Raymonds left her, than she said, "Robert, please stop at the Carmelite Church on your way back. I want to go into it for a minute or so. Drive quickly, please."

"Young miss wants to make some private perfection

of faith," thought he; but it was all one to him what she professed, he had nothing to do but obey. The Raymonds had been a little behind their time, and it was a quarter past eight when she reached the church; but a quarter of an hour would make no great difference, her correspondent would surely allow as much grace as is accorded at a dinner. Olive had already thrown her dark cloak over her light dress. "Wait for me, Robert," said she; "wait just there, round that dark corner." Her intention was to bring the writer of the letter out of the church, and to ask her to sit in the carriage with her while their conversation lasted, and thus she hoped to escape all observation or interruption. She went into the church. It was nearly dark, and was quiet and silent. No service was going on; no one was kneeling on the third bench, either at the right end of it or at the left. Some few persons were kneeling in other parts of the church. She approached each of these in turn. Three of them were men, two girls, and there was one old woman. To be quite sure that she neglected no possible opportunity, Olive sat down by the old woman and went through the prescribed formula. For this purpose she had taken a pair of dark gloves with her, but they produced no effect on the kneeler, and, convinced that she was not the person of whom she was in search, Olive rose to go nearer the door. There was no change in the aspect of that part of the church since she had gone away, no new person had entered; and, though she stood watching for some time, no one came. She went to the third bench and sat down, arranging her handkerchief and gloves as she had been bidden to do, and then once more she waited—not hopefully now, but with eyes heavy with tears. It was very bitter to her to fail. She sat half an hour, and each moment that she stayed there the consciousness of her dear mother's perfect and entire innocence became a more and more distinct and firm conviction. Her tears fell no longer. She would wait and hope. Still, she longed for the revelation to be made now. But alas! none came; one by one, those who had been in the church when she entered, departed,

and at last she felt that it was in vain to wait any longer. Not till she was nearly out of the church did she feel the pain of her finger. It was hurting her terribly, and had been doing so all the time she had been there, but the intensity of her thoughts had made her altogether unconscious of it. "If it hurts like this all night," thought she, "I shall not be able to close my eyes. I will go and ask the doctor what to do for it; he is sure to be able to stop the pain a little."

Lady Brooke's doctor lived in Young Street; Olive told the coachman to drive there. The doctor was in, but the servant said that he had some friends dining with him; still, he was sure if Miss Brooke would wait a moment he would see her. The pain was so excessive that Olive reluctantly consented. She did not like to intrude on him, but if she did not, she would have to wait until the last of his friends took leave. She was shown into a study with the usual medical equipment of arm-chairs and writing-tables, and with four large Landseer engravings hanging one on each side of the room.

Lady Brooke would naturally think that she had spent all the time which had elapsed between her leaving the Raymonds and reaching home, in waiting for the poor old doctor. It was well that she had this excuse, for it was now after nine. Presently the doctor came, did something medical and comforting to the finger, and assured her that, though the injury she had received was extremely painful, it would not be permanent.

It was half past nine when she gratefully bade the doctor good night, and in less than five minutes more she was at home.

She went into the drawing-room at once to seek her step-mother; not anxious or excited now: her half hour of meditation in the church had made her calm, resolute, and patiently watchful. In God's good time she would know the truth and be able to establish it. Lady Brooke was not in the drawing-room—nor was she in her own room, for when Olive went upstairs she saw her step-mother's door open, and, on going in to explain her own return, found

it empty. She rang to inquire where Lady Brooke was. The maid knew nothing about her. She said she thought she was in the drawing-room. So Olive went back there to wait and to wonder until she came. At 9.55, to her great surprise, Lady Brooke walked in, dressed in her bonnet and an old gray waterproof, under which her pretty evening-dress was ruthlessly tucked up. It was of soft pearl-gray satin, and a bit of it had dropped down unawares. She had evidently not expected to find Olive at home so early, but had intended at once to take off her out-door garments, arrange herself in invalid-fashion on the sofa again, and keep her absence from home a strict secret. So at least Olive thought from her manner, which showed her to be extremely disconcerted by this unlooked-for detection. She soon rallied and said, "Olive, I am sure you must wonder where I have been; I'll tell you, dear. My head grew worse every minute, so at last I took the sudden resolution to go and ask Mr. Seymour if he could not give me something to relieve it—you know his house—it's close by—so I put on my bonnet and this great loose cloak and went dressed anyhow as you see, but when I got there the wretched man had gone out to see a patient, and I did not like to come back without seeing him, so I waited there a whole hour. It was not nine when I went, and it is nearly ten o'clock now, and I have been sitting in that stuffy little consulting-room of his all that time, with nothing in the world to do or look at but four Landseer engravings! If you would like to hear an accurate description of any of them, I can give it to you, for I have studied every detail of each picture."

Olive almost gasped at the magnitude of this untruth, for she herself had been sitting in that very room only a minute or two before; and besides that, she knew that Mr. Seymour had not been out to see any patient, but had, on the contrary, been entertaining friends at home. "Do you mean that you have just come from Mr. Seymour's?" she said, thinking that Lady Brooke could not possibly be guilty of so black an untruth, and that there must be some great mistake.

"Yes; I have just left his house after waiting sixty weary minutes."

Olive wondered what to do—if she said, "I, too, have been at Mr. Seymour's," it was like convicting Lady Brooke of falsehood. If she said nothing, the doctor himself would be sure on his next visit to say something which would reveal the fact that he had seen her. Let him do so: Olive would leave that to happen as it would. She did not know what to say, and made this very odd remark, "I wonder Aunt Ullathorne does not employ Mr. Seymour; her doctor lives in Wimpole Street, and it is so nice to have one close at hand."

"Very!" replied Lady Brooke; "that's why I chose this man; but I did not expect him to keep me looking at his trumpery works of art for sixty minutes by his own clock. By the by, Olive, how do you happen to be at home so early? Has anything happened?"

Olive in a few words explained the reason of her return, on which Lady Brooke cried with great eagerness, "But your finger must be attended to at once! I will send for Mr. Seymour."

Olive recoiled. It was bad enough to know that her step-mother had not spoken the truth; but it would be terrible to be present when her falsehood was openly proclaimed, as it must infallibly be if Mr. Seymour were brought. After such an exposure her step-mother and she could no longer remain together—that would be impossible! Lady Brooke's hand was on the bell, but slowly it fell down by her side. She had not rung—probably she dared not. Had she done so, Olive would have prevented her from summoning the doctor by telling her that she had only just left his house. As it was, Lady Brooke seemed to forget about sending for him, and for her father's sake Olive let this rag of covering for her step-mother's perfidy remain undisturbed; but for her own outcast and forlorn mother's sake she determined to spend night and day in watching this treacherous woman with whom she now abode.

CHAPTER XXX.

Well, which of these must take my life in hand?
Pray God it be the better.—SWINBURNE.

MORRISON was still at St. Hilda's, and had never once wished to leave it. He had made great progress with his big picture, and had begun another from Rastwick Nab; but he was not leading quite so lonely a life as before, for he had become very intimate with his new friends in the next house, and often passed his evenings with them. It was delightful to him to see how much he could do to help and encourage any one so sincere in her desire for help and guidance as Miss Rosamond Keithley. He did not think her exactly pretty—at least, not at first—but found a great charm in her perfect honesty and freedom from all trace of conceit and affectation. Her face was one which would naturally be thought beautiful by country-folks like the Pickerings, for she had a very exquisite color and complexion, dazzlingly white teeth, and bright well-set eyes. They were large and dark, and looked thoroughly kind and honest. She was manifestly a woman who might be trusted implicitly, and really was very pretty; but her beauty was entirely due to sweetness of nature. She was rather short, but had a good figure, a winning manner, and a splendid *physique*. She never tired, scarcely knew what a headache was; had heard of people who suffered from toothache, but was only acquainted with the malady by hearsay; and, notwithstanding her good health, was neither boastful nor boisterous, but a very quiet, gentle, helpful woman, with a marvelous gift of unselfishness. To her Morrison's conversation, colored as it was by his intense feeling for beauty, and his knowledge on so many points on which she felt herself to be so ignorant, was a perfect intellectual feast; nevertheless, as she knew her aunt enjoyed talking, she for the most part contented herself with listening in delighted silence.

It is always flattering to any man, young or old, to see a pair of bright eyes grow brighter when he has said anything remarkably well, and Miss Keithley very often thought that he said things remarkably well. Morrison began to look forward to the evening with pleasure, instead of regarding it—and all the time when the sun was absent from the sky—as little else than a certain number of hours during which he was torn away from the dear delight of color.

It was too cold for steady painting out of doors, but by not sitting too long at one time he could manage to get some study of detail on the spot, besides, every day brought with it some new effect of light or color, and the splendor of the wintry sunsets was enough of itself to keep him where he was. Miss Keithley also was happier in her painting than ever she had been before. Morrison had given her exactly the help which she most needed, and his example, and the sight of his work, stimulated her to fresh effort.

About two o'clock one afternoon she was on her way out, when at the door of the next house she saw Mrs. Pickering, with angry little eyes and face warmed up by indignation to a red that was by no means becoming. She was scolding at the top of her voice, and loudly proclaiming that deeds must follow words, unless she was attended to at once. A meek-looking woman with a baby in her arms, and two children hanging on her skirts, was receiving the outpouring of her wrath.

"It's a sin and a shame that any one who slaves away as Mr. Morrison does should be 'tewed' in this way, with a nasty, mischievous, good-for-nothing little abominable tyke like your Tommy, and when he comes in I'll just tell him what a set I have every day to get that lad to do his duty! If I had had my way, I'd ha' made short work of him a very long time ago—that I would, I can tell you!"

Humbly the poor woman urged that it was not her fault—that she did her best; but with no head (husband) to help her, and such a heavy handful of bairns to strive and struggle with, it was no wonder that a big boy like Tommy took advantage of her sometimes.

"I'd advantage him!" cried Mrs. Pickering; "I'd give him a good sound warming; and if you like, I'll do it! Just you send him here, and, my word, if once I begin, if I don't make him know that it's me that's at him, and not you!"

"What is the matter?" inquired Miss Keithley.

"The matter's this, Miss Keithley: this good woman has a lad whom Mr. Merrison hires for to carry his things to him at Rastwick; he has half-a-crown a week, and nothing to do to earn it but to walk hisself along the cliffs every afternoon when it is fine, to meet Mr. Merrison, and give him the one bag and fetch back another that Mr. Merrison took out with him after breakfast—that's all; and this afternoon my young gentleman has chosen to play truant."

Morrison was painting a waterfall a mile beyond Rastwick in the morning, and, to lighten his heavy burden, did not carry with him the things he wanted in the afternoon, but had engaged this boy of nine, who had, however, in spite of Mrs. Pickering's strong language, only once before failed him.

"Where is the boy?"

"Gone off in a boat with some men to dig for bait, and Mr. Merrison will have to do without his sketching things. I am that vexed I could just take and skin the boy!"

"Couldn't you go?" said Rose Keithley to the boy's mother.

"Me, ma'am? I couldn't leave my bairns; they'd all do nothing but shout and cry till they saw me back again with them. There's plenty of boys—"

"There's no boys, nor men neither, to be had that I'd trust with these things! They'd set the bag down on the church steps and begin to play chuckie-stones; besides, none of them would know where to take it."

"What are the things?" cried Rose Keithley. "Are they too heavy for me to carry? They can't be, if a boy could carry them."

On this Mrs. Pickering produced a sketching-bag, care-

fully padlocked, lest the young gentleman should be seized with a sudden desire to finger its contents. Inside were two half-imperial drawing boards; they were heavy, but not beyond Rose Keithley's strength. She knew exactly where to find Morrison, for he had discussed the point of view of his drawing with her; so, after charging the two women to be sure to send the boy to bring back the sketching things used in the morning, she set out, hoping to arrive almost as soon as he would have done.

It was a lovely afternoon, warm for the time of year, and everything looked doubly beautiful for the soft veil of mist which was caused by the frostiness of the air. The sun was shining down on the old town, and wherever it was strong enough to break away this silvery veil, the intense red of the houses blazed forth. Such splendor of color was almost inconceivable; the houses glowed like richly-tinted fruits; golden browns and ambers ran into purple reds and glorified crimsons; wreaths of smoke from the chimneys mingled strangely with the filmy mist, and the sunbeams caught both and tinged them with delicate gold, and they faded away in one place, disclosing new wealth of color, or hid what had the minute before seemed the very eye of the picture, but which, now that some new beauty had sprung into existence to take its place, was never so much as missed. There were one or two fishing-boats in the river, quietly making their way out to sea for the night. Their sails, of every shade of velvety chocolate-brown, with golden lights on them, were glorious to behold. Every step of Rosamond Keithley's way brought her some such sight as this; but she did not stop to watch or dwell on her enjoyment, but walked briskly along the quay. It was market-day, and the quay was crowded. The bridge, when she came to it, was open, and over the heads of the black mass of men and women before her she saw the rich brown sails and taper masts of two boats which were gliding gracefully through. One of the chief charms of St. Hilda's is the way in which the sea-life runs into the town-life; and so closely are the two interwoven, that the mere summer's visitor finds himself hearing so much of the toils

and dangers of the towns-folk, that when he sees the boats making for the harbor's mouth his heart goes with them.

When once the bridge was shut, it was thronged with one dense struggling mass of carts, carriages, horses, and men, each and all of which had been waiting till the thoroughfare was restored. Rosamond Keithley and her sketching-bag pressed on with the rest. She hurried on as fast as she could, and climbed up the two hundred steps which led to the old church, tearing her eyes away from everything which tempted her to linger. She had never enjoyed a walk so much before. She was now on the very cliffs which had so short a while ago been her most bitter enemies, shutting her in from all escape. The bag began to feel rather heavy; but it was Mr. Morrison's, and she was doing him a slight service, and this thought gave her such pleasure that she almost danced along the fields, and at last she came upon him unexpectedly, for he had walked a short distance to meet the boy. He was standing close by the edge of the cliff, waiting and watching, for the sun was now exactly as he wanted it, and he was longing to get to work. He started when he saw Miss Keithley with his bag on her arm.

"My dear Miss Keithley! you surely have not carried that bag here? Your arm must be nearly broken! Oh, I am so sorry!"

A strange fit of shyness came over Rosamond Keithley, and she almost wished that she had not done it, or rather that she could have hidden it from him; but she soon recovered herself, and said simply, "It is nothing; I was coming out, anyhow. I am used to carrying things of this kind. Your boy has gone somewhere else, and poor Mrs. Pickering was afraid you would want your bag."

"I certainly wanted it. I was getting quite anxious about it, and am most grateful to you—but it is so heavy—you can't think how ashamed I am!"

"Don't be ashamed—don't think about it at all! It has been such a pleasure to me! If I carried your bag every day of my life, I should not have done a hundredth part of what you have done for me. But I shall do more

harm than good if I make you lose your time in talking—good-by—I ordered the boy's mother to send him to carry back your morning's things—what a quantity you have!

"Yes, I have three or four sketches going; but they are not all on heavy boards. The fall with a lot of water, the fall with hardly any, and a sunny one with the mill, and a dull one—that's the way to be upsides with the weather!"

"Good-by," again said Miss Keithley, seeing that politeness was making him diffuse in order to detain her.

"No," said Morrison, "please don't go back directly; let me have the pleasure of escorting you home—besides, I want you to have a cup of tea. It will warm you, and you won't mind seeing the sun set behind those cliffs."

"I should think not!" said she; but that he might feel free to go on with his work she added, "I think I will walk on to the next point, and then come back to you." The next point was more than a mile off, and he knew why she had gone, and was deeply grateful for her thoughtfulness, for, great as was his regard for her, he wanted to be alone for a while.

The sunset was a fine one, and when it was over he found Miss Keithley by his side. She had returned from her walk half an hour before, but had not liked to draw near whilst he was so busy. Somehow, he divined this—what a treasure of a girl she was!

Morrison packed up his sketches, and took her to a cottage hard by. "Look at the edging of that flower-border," said he; "what an old-world place St. Hilda's is!" A narrow flower-bed ran parallel with the path to the cottage door, and its border was composed of a series of hard gray bones, which had once been the backbone of a saurian. The cottager gave them some tea, and then they began their walk back to the town. What a change had come over everything since the sun had set! Nothing of its glory remained but one dusky amber bar across the westward sky. The short grass was already becoming white and crisp under their feet, and chill mists were creeping around them. The Abbey looked a mere ugly gray wreck,

cold and dull. No living creature was to be seen, but some cows waiting for their summons to the milking byre. They gazed on Morrison and his companion with an air of calm, well-considered approval. All might be gray and cold around them, but these two felt unusually light-hearted and buoyant. Her presence was infinitely soothing to him—she had never been so happy in her life.

"Have all artists as delightful a time of it as you have, Mr. Morrison?" she asked. He almost started, and said, "I have been very happy since I came here, thanks to you, I think; but in London I have vexations without end, great and small."

"What a shame! Poets and painters ought to be specially protected from all annoyances by the State. But what can you have to disturb you?"

"Oh, noises, and fogs, and society, and, worst of all, myself. I really think I shall never go back—London is not the place for me—I am convinced of that."

"St. Hilda's is perfect! We are going to stay a year."

"Quite perfect! It has everything a painter ought to want—sky, sea and rocks, picturesque boats and figures, and then there are splendid moors within reach—I don't see what more a man can desire, unless it be a run into Scotland now and then to refresh himself with the sight of a mountain."

"But you would be dull—you would want society."

"I suppose I should," said he, and thought of Olive; but such a life would not be to her taste—nor would any which he could give her. How few women, indeed, would regard a prolonged stay in St. Hilda's as anything but exile from all that made existence attractive! He glanced at the girl by his side, and thought that for many a long day he had not seen any one whose tastes were so like his own.

"I am inclined to think the church one of the most picturesque things in St. Hilda's," said Rose Keithley, and Morrison quite loved her for the speech. No one but an artist could have made it; the very first aspiration of the ordinary sea-side visitor is to see it pulled down. It was indeed a most picturesque church, with strange growths

clinging to the original fabric, having been eked out and added to whenever more space was required, and that, as it would seem, by the happy thoughts and flashes of inspiration of some adroit ship's carpenter. Were twenty new sittings desirable, what more natural than to seize on a huge fragment of some wreck, and affix it, as it would appear, almost wholesale? Were these new seats still insufficient, then repeat the experiment, and so on *ad infinitum*, the result being a building unrivaled in quaintness and defiance of all ordinary rules. Inside it looked more like the interior of a ship than anything else; and outside, as seen from the path by the Abbey, it looked like a hen sitting on a large brood of chickens, the chickens being represented by the odd corners and gables which jutted out on all sides, peeping out from the shelter of the main structure, like so many of those tiny creatures from beneath their mother's wings. Rose Keithley had always thought she knew St. Hilda's well; but Morrison was able to show her things which she had never seen before, and to tell her stories and legends which made the place a thousand-fold more interesting to her. He showed her the window where the pale ghost of the saint is said to be sometimes seen, and the low-lying gratings leading to the underground chambers where the smugglers used to hide their stores, and the graving-dock where the vessel was built that carried Captain Cook round the world. Their walk was a long one, but it seemed to come to an end very quickly. He had thoroughly enjoyed it. Arrived at her own door, Rose Keithley put out a pretty little hand and said, "Good-by, Mr. Morrison; you will come in for a while this evening?" There was something in her face which for the moment riveted Morrison's eyes to it. He felt strongly inclined to accept her invitation, but controlled himself and said, "Not to-night, thank you; I must deny myself: I have some work which must be done; I will come in to-morrow, if I may."

"If you may!" cried she. "Why, your visits are one of the greatest pleasures we have. You will come to-morrow?"

"Yes, without fail! I shall look forward to the time, you may be sure of that."

She went in, and, stooping over her aunt's chair to kiss her, exclaimed, "I have had a long walk with Mr. Morrison, aunt! Such a delightful one! Oh, I am so happy!"

Mrs. Keithley looked happy too, and said, "I really think he is very fond of you, Rose! I have thought so for at least a fortnight."

Rosamond Keithley turned away with a very red face. She did not quite know what she herself thought about this, but she knew what she wished to think.

As for Morrison, he went in and did not work at all, unless thinking may be regarded as work. He could not but see that in many respects Rosamond Keithley was, of all women, the one best suited to be his wife. Their tastes were identical, the same things would suffice to make both happy. She was charming in every way, and good and noble also. He could see no fault in her whatsoever; and though he did not love her, he had as he believed made great progress towards that, highly desirable state in which Olive Brooke would be altogether banished from his mind. There was every temptation now to drift into a course which would divide him from her forever. He had come to the conclusion that it would be madness to think of her, for this if for no other reason, that no success which he could possibly win in the springtime of his youth would be great enough to justify him in asking her to be his wife. Rosamond Keithley might have been sent on purpose to save him! What if he allowed himself to love? what if he could win as a helpmate the good sweet girl from whom he had so lately parted, with whom he could live in the bonds of calm affection, who would help him as only a quiet, loving woman can help, and who would be perfectly content to pass her days in retirement, seeing no one but himself? For art's sake, for true happiness' sake, this was assuredly the wiser course; he could not go on as he was doing now, with all his peace at the mercy of a chance event to destroy it; once plighted to another, he would never again be distracted by the thought of Olive.

He rose next morning, feeling happier than he had done for weeks, and steadfast in his purpose of the evening before. He thoroughly admired and respected Rosamond Keithley; he even began not to be so very certain that he did not love her just a little. It was a mighty relief to have come to this decision, and to feel himself well rid of all that had disquieted him so long. He swallowed a cup of tea, and then went to the window to see if Rose Keithley was to be seen, and if the drawing with which she was busy was already set out in the bay window. It was there; so, too, were glass and palette; but the industrious artist herself was not. "She is looking after her aunt's breakfast," thought he. "There is not a trace of selfishness in that girl's composition!" He began to long for the evening, and to wonder if she would ever care for him. As he stood by the window, the postman toiled up the steps, and presently a letter was brought to "Mr. Morrison:" a London letter, redirected by his servant who had sorry skill in penmanship. It had been mis-sent, and had passed through many post-offices, had been to St. Helier's and St. Helen's, and had even made a struggle to get to St. Kilda; but the common sense of North British postmasters had been against the idea of seeking any one there at that time of the year, and at last, after a delay of a whole fortnight, it had reached Morrison at St. Hilda's. He turned it round and round, and inspected the pithy comments of each office which had repelled it. He did not expect the inside to be more interesting than the out, but he opened it, and found it was from Mrs. Brooke.

"DEAR MR. MORRISON," she said, "we are at home again and trying to recommence our Tuesday evenings. I hope you will give us the pleasure of your company at the next, on February the 6th, at 9.—Yours ever truly, SELINA EGERTON BROOKE.

"P.S. I open my note to say that my niece, Miss Olive Brooke, has just been here, and has begged me to tell you that she hopes you will accept my invitation, for there is something which she particularly wishes to say to you."

He read this, and then, with eyes which would scarcely serve his turn, and mind confused with excitement, tried to grasp on what day he was invited. February the 6th. It was February the 6th that very day, and he was 360 miles from London. Few trains left St. Hilda's in winter, and the only one which would take him to London in time went at 8.45. It was now 8.40. He caught up his hat and coat, called to Mrs. Pickering that he was going away for a few days, ran off to the station, arrived there just in time to take a ticket and clamber into a carriage, and thus in five minutes his dream of a happiness which was to be enjoyed without Olive came to an abrupt end.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Wilt thou reach stars because they shine on thee?

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

“WELL, really, Mr. Willoughby, I don't agree with you. I never shall! To my mind an author who by one stroke of his pen can make his heroine enchantingly beautiful, is the most churlish of creatures if he refuse to do it. Besides, it is a great pity to have any ugliness in the world that is not absolutely necessary.”

Such were the words which greeted Morrison's ear, as in obedience to the invitation received that morning at St. Hilda's, he entered Mrs. Brooke's drawing-room. That lady was the speaker. She was standing in the midst of a group of authors and critics, and they were all giving their minds to the knotty point, whether a heroine of commanding ugliness did not often succeed in riveting the affections of a reader even more firmly than a beauty. Morrison instantly decided in favor of the beauty and looked round in search of Olive, but she was not in sight. She was probably in the inner room, but a crowd in the doorway prevented his ascertaining that.

“Your new heroine, Mrs. Brooke, can't be very attract-

ive," said Mr. Willoughby, "that is, if we are to judge by the title of your book."

"Yes, really, what an odd one you have chosen!" said another. "It is advertised for April, I see."

This was the novel which Mrs. Brooke had submitted to Olive, and then to the "*Quixotic Magazine*." She had called it "*Cross and Fifty*" by way of antithesis to "*Sweet and Twenty*," and, as may be divined by this title, it still contained a very exact portrait of Mrs. Ullathorne. The sacrifice demanded by Olive had been too great for her aunt. The "*Quixotic Magazine*" had refused the novel as a serial, but the publisher had taken a fancy to it, and had offered a tolerably tempting sum to be allowed to bring it out in the three-volume form, which Mrs. Brooke had accepted with delight. Still, though this was a success, she declared that she should never really feel that she had succeeded, until the day came when she had two publishers sitting in the breakfast-room waiting to compete for some MS., which she was finishing upstairs.

"It is perhaps rather a repulsive title," said she thoughtfully. "I am sorry, but it fits the book."

"You have been photographing some disagreeable old maid?" suggested a bystander.

"No, much worse than that,—a cross, old widow. Such an exquisitely cross one!"

On this Lady Brooke, who had been feeling languidly tolerant of all that went on around her, became suddenly interested, and though not much of a reader, resolved to make herself acquainted with the contents of her dear sister's new book. She did not feel very loving to Mrs. Brooke at present, and if her pen had been toying with Mrs. Ullathorne's special characteristics, would not be averse to bringing the work under that lady's notice.

Morrison pushed his way nearer to the second room. It was not so crowded as the first. Olive was sitting on a sofa talking to Mr. Ardrossan; her back was turned to Morrison. What a pretty little head she had, and how exquisitely beautiful were the curves which sloped down from it to her throat and neck! Her dress was a subdued

white satin, in the folds and shadows of which lurked varying shades of faint green and gray, contrasting with the rosy flush of interest in her face and the little ring of coral round her throat. She was deeply interested in what Mr. Ardrossan was saying to her, and had neither eyes nor ears for any one else. At least, so it seemed to Morrison, and so in fact it was. The truth was Mr. Ardrossan had accidentally shown some acquaintance with the east end of London, and Olive found that he was in the habit of going there constantly to look after one particular district whose inhabitants he was trying to raise and help. Ever since she had so unluckily failed to meet the woman who had written to her, Olive had been keenly on the alert to learn all that she could of the neighborhood of Bethnal Green, and though the remainder of the address had for the moment entirely slipped from her mind, she still hoped it would return to her. She was almost certain she should recognize the name of the street if she did but hear it mentioned. While Morrison was watching her with such a sudden and unexpected thrill of anxiety, she was saying to Mr. Ardrossan, "You know Bethnal Green, can you tell me the names of a few of the streets? The little, shabby, streets, I mean. I have a reason for asking this, perhaps I had better tell you what it is. I had a letter some time ago from some one there, a poor person. She gave me her address, but I only glanced at it. I was interested in the letter itself, and thought I could read the address afterwards, and then the letter was destroyed. It was a letter which I ought to have answered. I wish you could help me."

"I will if I can, you may depend on that. I will tell you the names of some streets, and if that won't do I will get you a map. But would you know the name you have forgotten if you heard it?"

"I think so, it is an odd one."

"Perhaps it is in my district."

"I hope so, I am sure." She felt implicit trust in Mr. Ardrossan's readiness to help her.

"Alexandra Street? Edward Street? Devonshire Street?"

"No, I think it was something to eat. I know it was."

"Mulberry Street?"

"That's it! How strange that you should know it!"

"It is in my district, at least part of it is. Perhaps I can help you to find the person."

On this Olive suddenly grew alarmed, feared she was confiding too much and said, "I don't know that I ought to tell you more. What kind of people live in Mulberry Street?"

"The poorest of the poor, and the lowest of the low," said he.

"Do you go there often?"

"Twice a week, for a few hours each time. My Scripture reader would help you to find any one you want."

Olive felt embarrassed. "Thank you," said she; "I will think it over for a few days, and then perhaps ask your assistance. I am not quite sure that I remember the woman's name. I feel very much obliged to you."

Lady Brooke was going away for a week, so Olive thought she herself might be at liberty to go where she liked, and having learnt the name of the street was resolved to do her best to find the woman whose name she almost fancied was Deanham.

"I will wait a few days and then if you wish it, do all I can for you,"

"And please don't say anything to Lady Brooke," said Olive, blushing deeply, at having to make such a request. He bowed. This was odd, but he could readily imagine that there was little enough sympathy between Olive and her step-mother. Morrison saw the blush, his face grew darker and darker. The more he looked at these two on the sofa, the more it seemed to him that they were made for each other. What right had he to thrust his own unmeaning pretensions between Olive and one who was in every way so infinitely more worthy of her than himself? He was almost inclined to retreat quietly, and go back next day to St. Hilda's and his work, and try to make himself believe that he had never been away. He was afraid, though, that if he did, he would have to make be-

lieve very much. What a perfect couple those two would make!

As this thought was stamping itself in on Morrison's mind, Mr. Ardrossan turned, saw his dejected face, almost read his thoughts, and said, "I must not be so selfish as to monopolize you entirely, Miss Brooke, here is an old friend of yours who would, I am sure, be glad to speak to you."

Olive looked round, saw Morrison, smiled, bowed and held out her hand. Somehow or other Mr. Ardrossan disappeared while she was saying:

"How kind of you to come, Mr. Morrison! It was almost a shame to bring you all the way from Chaucer Street just to hear what I have to say to you."

"I would come much farther than that, only to get a glimpse of you, let alone a word, indeed I have come much farther. When your aunt's letter reached me this morning, by the by, and I ought to tell you that it had been mis-sent, and had wandered about for nearly a fortnight, I was three hundred and sixty miles off."

"Really!" said Olive, "but you should not have come so far. What made me want to see you is that I have only just learnt from Mr. Ardrossan what a terrible walk you took for us when we were snowed up at Blair Angus. What ungrateful people you must have thought us! Neither my mother—neither Lady Brooke, I mean, nor I had any idea how much we owed to you. We were told that some of the gentlemen passengers had walked along the line and brought help, and we felt very grateful to them, but we never knew that you were the one to do everything, that you went alone, and hazarded your life at every step. Think of your doing that, and never even being thanked!"

"Oh, indeed, I was thanked, and far more than I deserved. I did nothing more than any one else would have done. Besides you did thank me in your letter—you—"

"That was only for giving me tea and bringing Pearson, and kind things of that kind," cried Olive. "I could not thank you for getting us away, or running such great risks for us, for Mr. Ardrossan only told me about it a fortnight

ago—I have been most anxious to do it ever since—most uncomfortable too till I could do it. I now thank you most sincerely—I am so glad that you were the one who did it all. It is just like a novel, isn't it?"

"I can't bear to look back on that night," said Morrison; "I behaved so shamefully!"

"Now, pray do not say another word about that," cried Olive. "I told you the exact truth in my note. I assure you you did not say one word then that I have not said to myself a hundred times. London and London life are all very well, but you don't know how often I wish I could go back to those happy old days at Austerfield! How simple life was there, and how perfectly delightful! Won't you sit down, Mr. Morrison? do sit down." And as Olive spoke, she slightly moved her dress a little out of his way so as to make room for him by her side. There was room enough already, but the pretty gesture of invitation was eminently flattering to the bewildered young gentleman who stood so near her. He hesitated a moment, but only because he was gazing at her and thinking that he had never yet seen her look so beautiful. He sat down by her side, half intoxicated by his position, and by the words which she had just uttered.

"It was indeed delightful," said he, after a brief pause. "I know I have never been half so happy since—" Unless it be now, was his next thought, but he dared not express it.

"And such little things made us happy!" she continued. "Do you remember how pleased we were one morning when we were in the shrubbery, and we found a bird's egg lying on the leaf of a hollyhock? It was a wren's, and it shone with a pink light and was covered with rosy spots—but how absurd I am to expect you to recollect such silly things!"

"I remember everything!" said he.

On this she blushed deeply, and said, "We were only children!"

She intended this as an apology for the past, but he said, "What have we gained by growing up? Not much, I

fancy. It is hardly to be counted as a gain that we are so much more difficult to amuse."

"I am sure it is not. But we were easily pleased then! If we happened to find an orchis an inch or two longer than any we had seen before, it was quite enough to put us in high spirits for the day."

"Do you ever feel the same happiness now, when you are in the country?" said he—"no doubt you do—I know I do, but then unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, my work and my pleasure have so mixed themselves up together now, that I can't enjoy Nature as one enjoys a poem or a picture. I am always finding myself thinking how I am to contrive to give even a faint hint of the beauty I see."

"But what beautiful pictures you do paint, Mr. Morrison! I know they are good because they have exactly the same effect on me that reading a very fine poem, or a bit of Mr. Ruskin's writing has. I make all kinds of grave resolutions, and am so anxious to act up to a high standard."

Morrison looked much pleased, but he must indeed have been difficult to please if such words as these, from such a girl as Olive, did not have that effect. "My pictures are not really good," said he, "you must not fancy that they are, but if work will make them so, they shall be. If ever I did succeed in painting pictures which the world thought good," said he, hurriedly, and very nervously too, for he saw a movement amongst the crowd, which seemed to denote that his *tête-à-tête* must soon be interrupted—"if ever this happened—and I dared to presume on our old acquaintance, and came to you then, and asked you to renew our happy old life, would there be any chance at all of your listening to me?"

"But I don't think I quite understand," said Olive, blushing nevertheless, and looking round in great alarm to see if any of the people in the room, who were now pressing so much nearer to them, were near enough to hear what was passing.

"In those days, if you remember, we lived for each

other—our happiness consisted in being together. We were only children, I know, and things have changed—changed terribly, but there is one thing in which I am not changed—I never was happy without you then, and shall never be happy without you now. I know I ought to keep all these feelings to myself—that a man in my position has no right to speak thus to you, but do answer one question—supposing I could win a name for myself and thus lessen the difference between us, do you think you could ever care for me?—would you share my life, I mean?—I am afraid it is too presumptuous even to think of such a thing!” he added, for he could not but see how embarrassed she was.

“Oh no, not presumptuous at all—don’t use such dreadful words! On the contrary, you do me a great honor, but—”

“‘But,’ don’t say ‘but,’ dear Olive. Forgive my calling you so. I love you with all my heart, I would do anything to win you.”

Olive shook her head. “You must not think of this,” said she.

“Not think of this?” he said, taking courage; “I shall think of it as long as I live. My love for you will last from the beginning to the end.”

“It is impossible,” she said.

“Just answer one thing,” said he—“Do you think it is quite impossible for you ever to feel for me as you used to do? That’s what I want so to know. If you say yes, I must try to bear it; but if you think there is the least chance, I want to ask you to wait a year or two for me—to give me time to do something, I mean. You don’t know how I would work! But I am in such dread of seeing some one carry you off before I have time to do anything.”

“If I ask you never to speak on this subject again,” said Olive faintly, “please do not think that it is because I feel that there is this difference between us of which you speak—I do not admit that there is—I consider that any one who paints as you do, has a rank far above any that the world

can give—you honor me by thinking of me at all, but I must not let you do so—my mind is full of something else. I have no heart to give—I can love no one, think of no one, until the thing which fills my mind is settled.”

Morrison was intensely puzzled. She looked so strange while she spoke, and seemed so in earnest. Was she engaged to some one else? or tortured by religious doubts, or on the point of turning Roman Catholic? What could it be? “But you won’t always feel in this way,” said he. “Let me speak to you again some other time. Let me go away now with a little hope, and come back in—say, a year’s time.”

“Oh no!” cried Olive, “it would be wrong if I let you do that. I can give you no hope whatever.”

“You know you can never like me as you used to do?”

“I am afraid not. I shall always feel that you stand in a different relation to me from every one else—always have the greatest regard for you, and desire to be good friends with you—you must not ask for anything more.”

He tried to read her face. It showed the fixedness of a steady purpose—he looked at the people in the doorway—they were still standing in a solid mass and appeared willing to leave him still more time to urge his suit, but all the people in the room with them showed symptoms of a desire to change their places, and one or two had come dangerously near. He saw this, but was resolved to use to the uttermost this one chance, and said in a low voice, “Do not speak so very decidedly. Say I may keep just a little hope and may come back in a year or so—I am not like a stranger, you know. I have felt as I do now ever since we parted as children.”

“Do not ask me to do this,” said she once more.

“At all events say that you wish me well.”

“That needs no saying!” she replied kindly. “I do, and always shall wish that. Let us always be friends, Mr. Morrison.”

He thanked her for this permission to call her friend, but he felt almost inclined to go somewhere where he would never see her again. It seemed to him that this would be

infinitely preferable to meeting her occasionally as a mere friendly stranger. The break which had occurred in their conversation was observed—a gentleman who had been hovering about for some time for the chance of a few words from Miss Brooke, now came and spoke to her, and Morrison went and joined the black-coated crowd which had been standing in the doorway so long. The new-comer dropped unbidden into Morrison's place—the waves of society closed in; Morrison did not know how he got into the larger room—he was in no state to be conscious of pain or discomfort from without—when there he found himself side by side with Mr. Ardrossan.

"Never dare to say that I have not behaved nobly to you to-night!" said that gentleman. "I gave you my place without a murmur."

"You did. It was very kind of you, but don't let me drive you away from Miss Brooke again. You and she get on a thousand times better than she and I could ever do. Don't let me keep you from her. Good night; I am going."

Mr. Ardrossan's eyes followed his young friend with some curiosity—how much, or how little, did he mean?

CHAPTER XXXII.

I like not the humor of lying.

Merry Wives of Windsor.

I am a simple woman, much too weak

To oppose your cunning.

Henry VIII.

HANNAH DEANHAM, Mulberry Street, Bethnal Green. All that night of Mrs. Brooke's party, these names were never absent from Olive's thoughts. Even though she had just had an offer of marriage, she still found her mind recurring to them, and the work which lay before her next day. As soon as she had the comfort of seeing the cab drive away with Lady Brooke to

Euston Station, she meant to lose no time in setting out for Bethnal Green. She had told Morrison that she could think of no subject but one, and she had told him the exact truth—every wish of her heart was summed up in the one burning desire to establish her mother's innocence, and that done, to seek her out in her hidden retreat, gladden her heart by the tidings, and then to spend her own life in trying to make her mother's last years happy. No love should ever come to disturb that which she meant to give to the poor mother from whom she had been so long and so cruelly divided. She perfectly well remembered the unhappy, wasted-looking woman with a face more noble and beautiful than any picture, who not a year before, had come to the outside of Mrs. Ullathorne's house and had gazed in on her through the window, with eyes full of love and pain. That was her mother, her own dear mother, and even if she were mad—even if she were shut up in Bedlam itself, Olive would rather stay there with her, if by so doing she could lessen her sufferings, than remain where she was with the base woman who had supplanted her.

Morning came. Olive was down first, but that was because she could not sleep. It would not have been easy to find anything which would prevent Lady Brooke from sleeping, and sleeping well. She came down-stairs as usual, looking happy and peaceful, and thoroughly refreshed by the night's calm rest. She noiselessly entered the breakfast-room, and made for her seat and her letters. Olive busied herself with the teapot.

"My dear, here is a letter from your Aunt Ullathorne. She is coming back next week," said Lady Brooke in a tone which betokened some slight vexation.

"Indeed," said Olive who did not care what happened, so long as it was nothing which kept her away from Bethnal Green.

"Yes, next week, so we shall have to be ready for her."

"Can't I do what is wanted?" said Olive eagerly, in great fear that Lady Brooke might give up her journey.

"Of course you can. See that all the better china is

put back in her cabinets and cupboards, and be sure to leave the doors wide open, to let it get thoroughly dusty, and then she will never know that we have used it. Do it carefully—she is very cunning. I hate cunning people, Olive!”

“So do I!” cried Olive, with extreme fervor.

Lady Brooke continued, “Put the better things of all kinds away, just as she left them. You know what to do. I shall be back in four days—I did intend to spend a week, but four days will do, or even three.” And then she let her eyes stray over her step-daughter’s face, and Olive could not but notice that there was a strange gleam of satisfaction in them which seemed to betoken that this journey to Liverpool was one which boded her no good.

“What a nuisance!” cried Lady Brooke, returning to the perusal of Mrs. Ullathorne’s letter. “I did not notice this bit, ‘I forgot when I left home to ask you to be very attentive to Dr. and Mrs. Ullathorne, but I am sure your own kind heart would lead you to show them every civility in your power, without any prompting from me.’ I am afraid that my own kind heart has led me to leave them in their own home. I suppose we ought to have had them, but we have not—will Mrs. Ullathorne be very angry?”

“I don’t know—she can be angry.”

“Well, you have not much to do, Olive, suppose you were to go in a cab with Pearson and make a call on them?—you could do that while I am away. Go and be very civil to them, and explain that nothing but ill-health has prevented our seeing a great deal of them. You might like to go to Bethnal Green? That’s where they live, isn’t it?” And as she said this, Lady Brooke, though she appeared to speak carelessly, was attentively studying Olive’s face with eyes not altogether free from pleasure.

“I don’t know—I—” stammered Olive, and then she took courage and said, “Do you wish me to go?”

“No, I can’t say I do. Please yourself about it, dear—I am completely indifferent as to whether you go or not!”

Olive's heart sank. Was Lady Brooke stating a fact, or making a chance speech? It sounded one of ill-omen.

"Make Pearson get all our things together," continued the elder lady. "When I come back, I will see about some lodgings for the rest of the time I am here."

Olive looked up in surprise.

"Yes, I shall not stay long in England now—perhaps a few weeks longer—perhaps not so long."

Lady Brooke had not been very explicit with regard to her journey to Liverpool. She had told Olive that she was going to see a friend off to America, but had left the name of her friend and all else in obscurity. It must, however, be some one in whom Lady Brooke felt great interest, for she was not in the habit of showing signs of affection which cost so much trouble as this journey would give her.

The cab came at eleven, and then, dressed in warm velvets and furs, with soft shawls, and rugs and book and paper-knife, and every comfort necessary to her comfortable nature, she drove away.

"Lor!" ejaculated Pearson when she saw the last of her, "but this do surprise me. Lady Brooke has never once since I've been with her, left me behind. She always says she can't get along without me nohow, and it's true, she can't! Well, I do wonder at her going without me now—so private-like!"

Olive heard this, and it made her feel unhappy, a strange feeling of dismay came over her. She had thought that when once her step-mother was gone, she herself would be quite free to go where she liked—now it seemed to her that it would be useless to attempt to go to Bethnal Green, for Lady Brooke would be watching every avenue of approach to the district, and, no matter how she went, would pounce on her at once, and straightway put all her plans and projects to abject confusion. She dressed herself plainly. With "Bradshaw" in hand as her credentials, she left Kensington Square. None of the servants seemed to remark her departure. Pearson, whom she met on the

stairs, had evidently not been ordered to insist upon accompanying her.

"Shall you be in at luncheon, Miss Brooke?" said the maid, but when Olive said she thought not, Pearson had no amendment to propose. Olive felt that she was left to do what she liked. She looked back to see if she was watched or followed; she saw that she was not. "First return, Mansion House," said she boldly, proud of her knowledge, for she had never yet traveled by the Metropolitan Railway, but when she got to the Mansion House she was still a very long way from her journey's end, and as she drove in a rattling cab through the dreary streets, she felt them to be interminable. "They talk of the poverty and distress of the people at the East End," thought she, "but how can they ever eat up all the food in these shops?" Provision shops stared her in the face every moment, and street succeeded street, and still she was far from her goal. "Put me down at Mulberry street, Bethnal Green. Ask your way, or do you know it?" said she to the driver.

"No. I can't say as how I do know it. It's not a part we're often asked to come to," said he; "what number, miss?"

"I have forgotten the number. Put me down in the street—that will do."

It was two o'clock when the cabman departed full of delight with her want of knowledge of cab fares. Mulberry Street! She had found it! And now she had an undefined feeling that providence would vouchsafe some guidance to her—would give her some clew to the house. She held her "Bradshaw" well in sight, and walked from one end of the street to the other, waiting for the mysterious prompting which she was firmly resolved not to disregard. It was a long street, cut in half by a great dismal main thoroughfare. Olive crossed this, and walked to the very end, but had no feeling about any of the houses except thankfulness that she had not to live in any of them, and as she walked back, her way was illumined by no heaven-sent intuition. She had carefully studied the names

on all the house-doors and shops, but that of Deanham did not meet her eyes. When she had traversed both sides of the street, she began to work in a new way. She ran after a postman whom she saw, and asked him if he knew the name. He almost thought he had noticed it on some of his letters, but could make no statement more precise. The policemen were ignorant—the provision shops the same, so then she thought she would inquire from door to door. It was a trying thing for a girl like Olive, who had scarcely ever been out alone even in the West End, suddenly to find herself exposed to all the incivilities of busy folks at the East. Patiently she once more went from the bottom of the street to the top, lingering here, questioning there, but hearing nothing anywhere. She was weary and terribly disappointed—her feet ached, and she was faint with hunger. It was now nearly five, and she had not eaten anything since early morning. She saw a shop which was clean enough to inspire partial confidence, and went to buy herself some biscuits. While eating, she used her opportunity and asked the shopkeeper some questions—but he, too, had nothing to tell her.

“How much do I owe you?” said she, in haste to go, but when she put her hand into her pocket for her purse, it was gone—some of the more urbane part of the population who had listened to her inquiries with politeness, had also relieved her of the trouble of carrying such a weight. She was aghast, and cried, “My purse has been stolen!” and she looked so unhappy that the man believed her.

“Was there much in it?” he asked.

“Some silver—I don’t exactly know how much,” and then she remembered that Lady Brooke had given her a five-pound note to pay a bill and that was gone; and worse than all, her return ticket was gone too!

“What shall I do?” cried she.

“So far as the biscuits are concerned, miss—you have only eaten one, and you are welcome to it,” said he, and thought he had performed rather more than the whole duty of man.

"But my ticket—what shall I do?"

He put the lid on the biscuit-tin and then set it rather noisily in its place on the shelf. She was not to have the run of that tin any longer. Olive saw that he would not willingly lend her money to buy a new ticket, and did not choose to expose herself to a refusal. "Give me your name and address," said she, "and I will pay for my biscuit by letter. I will walk home, I think." Murmuring something about, "very sorry, I'm sure, but really there are so many impostors about," he let her go. She set her face westward, and was just going to sink into complete despair when she remembered that she was undergoing this for her mother's sake, and was reconciled at once, and strong to suffer; and then she remembered that she had no need to walk home—she could take a cab and pay the man at the journey's end—only cabs were scarce in Mulberry Street. Feeling now more at ease about her return home, she thought she might venture to make a few more inquiries for Mrs. Deanham, and did so, but with no better result, and at last she thought she must delay no longer. It was half past five, and as yet she had not seen a single cab. There was nothing for it but to urge her poor tired feet to fresh exertion. Suddenly, about a hundred yards in front of her, she saw a gentleman—he came quickly out of one of the poorest houses in Mulberry Street. She seemed to know his figure, and looked again with eager hope—he half turned, and she saw that it was Mr. Ardrossan.

She tried to overtake him, but he was walking so quickly that, do what she might, she could not lessen the distance between them. Her very desire to stop him seemed to paralyze her power of movement—she could neither run nor call. A carriage drove into the street; it was his and in another moment he would have been gone, had she not raised her hand as a signal to the coachman, and he waited till she came up. Mr. Ardrossan put his head out of the carriage to see why he did not drive on, and to his amazement saw Olive, who, too much out of breath to speak, was standing in distress and confusion on

the pavement near him. She blushed when she saw how surprised he was, and exclaimed, "Oh, how thankful I am that I have met you!" and then a slight twitching of the muscles of her mouth showed that her excitement was inclined to take the form of tears.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Who shall account for the love that is lost?

Joaquin Miller.

HE was out of the carriage in a moment, and by her side. "Dear Miss Brooke," said he, "what can I do for you? Only tell me, and it shall be done."

Olive began to speak, but was ashamed to say, "Lend me a shilling to buy another ticket," and hesitated. "I have had such bad adventures," said she at length. "I will not keep you standing till I tell you all, but the worst is, that my purse has been stolen from me, and my railway ticket is in it, and now—don't laugh at me—I am here in this dreadful place, and can't get home! I have been trying to find a cab, but cabs don't seem to come here."

"But I hope you will allow me to take you home," said he. "Please do; I am rewarded for coming here to-day, when I was half inclined to go somewhere else, by having this chance of being useful to you."

She dropped into her place in the carriage like one who was thoroughly weary. She looked pale, and he could see that she was utterly dispirited. "You have been trying to find your Bethnal Green correspondent, and have tired yourself to death?"

"Yes," replied Olive, but she felt not a little embarrassed.

"Why not let me help you?"

"Indeed, I would in a moment—I am most anxious to do so, but it is something I do so want to keep secret," she said faintly.

"If you dare trust me with so much of your secret as is necessary to enable me to be of some assistance to you,"

said he, "I promise you faithfully to keep all that you tell me secret, and to inquire no further—but don't let me persuade you against your better judgment."

"It is such a strange secret—one so difficult to talk about," pleaded poor Olive. How could she speak to any one of her mother, and of the terrible thing that was said of her?

"Then do not distress yourself," said he.

"But you will think it so strange of me to refuse."

"Nearly every one living has some secret which he longs to keep hidden from all. I may ask you one thing, though—have you been successful in your search?"

Two bright tears swam in Olive's eyes—she looked down to hide them, and could only answer by a hopeless shake of the head.

"Well, dear Miss Brooke, remember that if you like to intrust me with the name of the person whom you wish to find, my Scripture reader shall visit every house in Mulberry Street, and it is impossible for him to fail. He is a poor man himself, and knows all the people in the place quite intimately. He would have a far better chance of success than any one else."

"Thank you," said Olive, who instinctively felt that her new friend was one in whom absolute reliance might be placed; "the woman's name is Deanham—Hannah Deanham. She wrote to me from Mulberry Street as you know, but I have been to every house to-day, and no one can tell me anything about her. She can't live there!"

"In two days' time, at the latest, you shall hear whether she is to be found or not, and no one shall know that you are interested in the search. The inquiry shall be made in my name, and I am constantly making inquiries of this kind."

"Thank you," again said Olive. Then she added impetuously, "Mr. Ardrossan, don't think I don't trust you—I really should like to tell you all—I want help terribly, and I know you would help me more kindly than any one else would, except my Uncle Richard, and I am not allowed to talk to him."

She saw Mr. Ardrossan's look of surprise, and added, "My aunt does not like me to talk to him of this—he is too ill to be worried about painful things."

Mr. Ardrossan's face showed so evident a desire to help, and yet such a strong determination not to embarrass Olive by pressing his services on her, that she could not but say, "I will tell you all I can—you will think it strange of me to change my mind, but it seems so mean only to tell you half a secret when you are so kind, and yet I can't tell you quite all." He smiled, and his smile was a very pleasant one. She began: "Some one related to me was accused of a crime, and I believe falsely accused. I know nothing of the story, my aunt in Harley Street would not tell it to me, and I don't want to know it until I can prove it to be false; but for many reasons I am certain that the accused person was innocent. I had thought so for some time before I received that letter from this Hannah Deanham, asking me to meet her. She said if I would meet her she would put me in possession of every proof of innocence that I could wish—isn't it hard that everything has turned out so badly?"

Mr. Ardrossan was sufficiently acquainted with Olive's family history to be quite aware what she referred to. He was silent for a moment and then he said, "But you did meet her?"

"No. I am not my own mistress. She made two appointments with me, and I sometimes think that I was very cleverly prevented from keeping either—now you see how important it is to find her."

"She shall be found," he said earnestly, "but how am I to tell you the result of the inquiries I am about to make?"

"Write a line to me to Kensington Square."

He nodded and said, "Now forget about this; it is not good to dwell on painful subjects—let us talk about our friend Morrison." Olive blushed—almost for the first time that day she remembered what had happened the night before.

"He has been at St. Hilda's," continued Mr. Ardrossan,

looking at her pretty face with considerable uneasiness because of its change of color. "Did he tell you if he had done anything there?"

"No. He did not."

"Did he say whether he was going back?"

"No. I do not know what he is going to do."

Mr. Ardrossan continued to talk of Morrison—he particularly wished to know whether, as the saying goes, there was anything between Olive and his friend or not. He piqued himself on being able to discover this by infallible signs after a very short conversation, and thought he did discover that there was nothing. Why did this discovery give him so much pleasure?—why did Olive's recent confidence make him so proud and happy?

He began to talk of other things. Olive listened with delight, and though the way was long and the streets most monotonously dull, she thought they got into a part of the town that was familiar to her much more quickly than she had anticipated. She was happy about her mother, for now she felt confident that she should establish her innocence. Mr. Ardrossan, who was strong, and wise and practical, had promised to help her, and no one living could give such effectual help as he. He had always admired her, but to-day she was unusually beautiful. More than once lately he had seen her looking careworn and ill; never had he seen her more depressed than when she entered his carriage. Now he had the delight of being able to tell himself that this return to ease and even gayety dated from the time when he had promised to devote himself to the task of helping her. He was perfectly right, she had not enjoyed anything for months as she was enjoying this conversation. "Ah, Mr. Ardrossan," she exclaimed when her long drive was all but over, "you have made me forget all my troubles. I have never once thought of them since you promised to help me."

He looked delighted, and began to thank her for what she had said, but soon he checked himself—there was such a danger of saying a little more than he ought. "She is thinking me old enough to be her father," said he to him-

self, "that's why she speaks to me with such unguarded frankness. She would not tell a young fellow like Morrison that he had made her forget all her troubles! She looks on me as she looks on her uncle in Harley Street, but with this in my favor, that she may talk to me—that it won't hurt me. Poor child, words like those of hers do hurt men sometimes, even though they have reached a mature age. I am supposed to have got beyond the age of sentiment." Presently he remembered that he ought not to be so silent, and said, "If we have the good fortune to find Hannah Deanham, I should like you to allow me to do all that is done to conduct the business further. Bethnal Green is a long way off, and not a very nice place for a young lady like you; besides, people of her class are sometimes very difficult to deal with." He carefully toned down his speech to mere benevolent friendliness—he wished to place this matter on a purely business-like footing. Seeing that she was just a little slow in answering, he added, "If you can trust me to do this, I will act for you as if you were my own—" he hesitated, the sacrifice of saying daughter was too gigantic for him—he made the attempt, but it ended in his using the word "sister."

"I do trust you most thoroughly," said Olive, looking in his handsome face as she spoke, with such a pretty expression of implicit reliance that he felt nearly beside himself, "and I am so thankful to you too—I have been very unhappy about this for a long time—ever since I first knew about it, and I am so entirely without the comfort of having one single person to whom I can speak."

By the last post on the night following, Olive received a letter from Mr. Ardrossan to say that he and his Scripture reader had devoted the whole of that day to the discovery of Hannah Deanham, and that they had made a thorough search in every house in Mulberry Street and near it, but no such person was there, or had been there, for many months. He promised to bear the subject in mind, and to continue his investigations in the neighborhood, but in the mean time he advised Olive not to think too much of the letter she had received—such letters were

frequently written merely with the object of extracting money from those to whom they were sent, and were totally false and untrustworthy. This might be one of that kind. His letter was extremely kind, but Olive felt a weight of pain fall on her as she read it—she had not till then realized how close to her heart lay the desire to clear her mother's reputation. She read Mr. Ardrossan's letter once or twice. It was clear that he thought Hannah Deanham's letter was the production of a mercenary impostor—how terrible it would be if she herself were at length compelled to believe the same thing! The shock this letter gave her was most unexpected and bitter—she had been buoyed up all day with hope—she had been so certain Mr. Ardrossan would be successful.

And while Olive was sitting in a dark corner in Mrs. Ullathorne's drawing-room, far too miserable to look up or turn to the light, Lady Brooke was lying back in the most comfortable chair that was to be found in the best room of the best hotel in Liverpool. She had drawn it close to a bright fire, had made the waiter bring her a small table on which were set the wax candles which would soon play such an appreciable part in her bill; beside these were two yellow-backed French novels, a box of chocolate, and a plate with some cut lemons—she had read somewhere that lemons prolonged life, and to her life was sweet. To her the world was a perfect one, and life, so long as she could manipulate it a little, perfect also. Who could have been happier than she, as, loosely clad in a warm, fur-lined dressing-gown, with her feet in fur-lined slippers, she lay back basking in the consciousness of having just conducted an extremely difficult and important piece of business to a fortunate and thoroughly successful conclusion? It was now more than a year since she had received an intimation which a fidgety, or unnecessarily nervous, person might have suffered to destroy all her peace. Lady Brooke had of course not been untouched by this warning. It had had the effect of bringing her to England, but she had not come to England in such a state of alarm and anxiety that she had been unequal to the task of coping with the

threatened danger when it presented itself. On the contrary, she had retained the command of all her faculties—she had been cool, collected, and capable from first to last, and the glorious result was this—that very day she had taken Hannah Deanham on board a big Cunard steamer bound for New York, and had seen it steam away with her!—she had forever silenced and got rid of the woman—the only living person who had it in her power to injure her. Now she feared no one, and could only think with delight of all that she had done during the last twelve months. Another woman would have lost heart when she heard that Hannah Deanham had set out from Australia for the purpose of revealing all that she knew. Lady Brooke felt no fear at all, provided she could get speech of the woman. She perfectly understood her character. She had not come back from any wish to do right, but simply because she wanted more money—give her money, and she would again go away as she had gone before. The last sum paid her had kept her away nearly twenty years—the same sum repeated would have the like effect—in twenty years more she might come or go as she chose—most of those who were now interested in hearing her story would then be beyond reach of being affected by it. It had been rather a wrench to part with the large sum of money required to bribe Hannah Deanham to take her departure, but such sacrifices have to be made sometimes, and to grieve over them is to double the pain they give you. Hannah Deanham was now rolling on the open sea, and Lady Brooke trusted to her promises so implicitly, that she never once wished that the ship which contained her would go to the bottom. That worry was gone out of Lady Brooke's life forever! She would now go back to her husband. She would tell him of all that had been done for Olive—how beautiful she was, how much admired, and how certain to marry; and if after that he still continued to be so tiresome and so unhappy about her, Lady Brooke did not intend to let his low spirits affect hers as before. She would henceforth live more for herself. And so she sat the live-long evening through, and

read her book, and was happy. The danger which had so greatly threatened her was overpast—why should she not be happy? Happy she was, nay, even gay, and once she laughed aloud and laughed again with pleasure at the sound of her own merry voice, and this time her mirth was prompted by the thought that perhaps this very day, poor, silly, wool-gathering Olive was wandering, footsore and unsuccessful, from house to house in Mulberry Street, Bethnal Green, seeking in vain for the writer of that ill-written letter, of which Lady Brooke was now almost certain that she herself had read more than the person for whom it was intended. “Poor, silly goose of a girl,” she said to herself, “I gave her a tolerably plain hint that if she went she would certainly lose her labor! I hope she did go—it will teach her not to have plots and schemes which she is not clever enough to manage. I shall always be amused when I remember her futile efforts that day to get out to meet Hannah Deanham. How stupid she was; she had two splendid chances, and lost both! If she had only had the sense to walk across the square to Gloucester Road Station as I should have done, she would not have been caught by me in King Street. Never shall I forget how dismayed she looked when she saw me! She really is a charmingly pretty girl, but no one can say that she has the least control over her features—you can always see what she is thinking—and then she actually let me get to the Carmelite Church first!—Hannah Deanham and I were just going into the passage to Palace Gardens, when the Raymonds’ carriage drove up with Olive—but then one minute in advance is as good as fifty, when it is enough to make you safe.”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Quand on n'a pas ce qu'on aime, il faut aimer ce qu'on a.

THREE weeks after that evening at Mrs. Brooke's, Morrison was on his way back to St. Hilda's, and most heartily he wished he had never left it. His journey had brought him nothing but vexation and weariness. He had of late thought far more about life and how to shape it, than any one is intended to think—of that he was convinced. For the future, he would trouble himself with no such perplexities—he had his work to do, and that was enough for him. He reached St. Hilda's about six—the evening was dull, the sea leaden, nothing was bright but Mrs. Pickering's face, nothing warm but her welcome. He was glad to get back. His books and sketching folios were lying about, the rooms looked very homelike, and after dining comfortably he sat down to read. After a while a most unaccustomed sound met his ears: some one next door was playing the Pastoral Sonata.

"Oh, deary me!" cried Mrs. Pickering, who chanced to be in the room at the time, "I never once thought of that happening! I might have sent word that you were expected, and then I am very sure and certain you would never have been plagued with any music."

"Plagued! Mrs. Pickering! It is magnificent. It is Miss Keithley who is playing, I suppose?"

"Yes, it's her, I'll be bound for it, but she'd never have set that pianny open if she'd ha' known you were here. She's well aware you don't like music—I tell't her myself you didn't, and she must have seen you setting the organs off!"

"Not like music!—organs and accordions are not music—I should be a barbarian if I did not like such music as that!"

"So the owld lady next door said, sir, when you were here before! Her servant-girl told me she did, but Miss

Rose, sir, she said as how she was a bit of an artiss herself and quite understood the artistic temperryment, and that you shouldn't have none of your work spoiled with listening to her playing whether you wanted it or not ! ”

“ And so she denied herself ? ”

“ Indeed she did ! But she has made up for it since you left, sir. It's not a deal of penting can have been done by her ! She has sat for hours together at that pianny—our Cuthbert he says he likes it, and it is good music, and he knows what good music is. But lawk a mercy me, Mr. Merrison, but it is mournful and dowly-like, and you hear it so fair, and when all's said and done, it is more like the tune the old cow died of than anything else ! For my part I often wish her fingers would tire. ”

“ How are the ladies next door, Mrs. Pickering ? ”

“ Oh, none so well by all accounts. First the owld lady had a bad bout, and then the young one, but I reckon the young one must have been a deal the worst, for she carries illness set on her face. ”

“ I am very sorry— ” began Morrison.

“ Aye, so am I. I am sure she has been real bad. ”

Morrison expressed great regret and felt it, but then he was silent, for he wanted to listen to the sonata, and said so. Mrs. Pickering unwillingly retreated. Miss Keithley played the Toccata of Galuppi and then shut the piano. To think that she had foregone such a delight as her music must be to her, for his sake ! It was another proof of her unselfishness. He felt a strong wish to thank her, and scribbled a line to Mrs. Keithley to ask if he might run in for half an hour during the evening to shake hands with them. His note was only a civil formality, as he had a standing invitation for the evening ; but as they had both been ill, and he himself away, he did not like to presume upon it. Soon came an answer. “ Mrs. Keithley regrets that she is unable to receive Mr. Morrison this evening. She is not quite well, which Mr. Morrison must kindly accept as her excuse. ” He threw the note down with a slight feeling of disappointment, but a minute or two afterwards he picked it up again to see if he was right in

fancying that it was very stiffly worded. It did seem so. Perhaps they were annoyed with him for going away so abruptly without a word of warning; but he had written a line from London to say that he had felt a sudden desire to get back there for a week or two, but meant to return to St. Hilda's, and hoped to see them again when he did. They had no right to be offended with that. He resolved to pay a formal call next day, well within the limits of the prescribed hours, and then make his peace.

He did call. Miss Keithley had gone out. Mrs. Keithley was not very well. He felt sorry not to see them and went for a long walk. Next day, for the first time, he ventured to look at his pictures. It is always a terrible moment for an artist when he confronts a bit of his own work after an interval of time during which he has perhaps been allowing himself to think hopefully of it. That first glance after an absence, reveals so much that had escaped the eye before. For once he experienced no strong revulsion. He even began to work. The pictures were thoroughly dry and in a delightful state to paint on, and he never stirred from that room for ten days, except for meals. Even at night he was occupied with them, for night and its comparative obscurity helped him to see the composition, and he could always find enough to do in studying parts. At last they were done, and he had the strength of mind to see that they were so, and took his hat and went to make another call next door. While he was standing outside he could not help wondering why they had left him so long without taking any notice of him—he had not had time to think of this before. It was more than ten days since he had last called—he had already tried to see them twice—if they could not admit him when he offered a visit, why not fix a time when they could?

"The ladies were out driving," said the servant. Morrison had nothing to do now that his pictures were finished, so rather by chance than by choice, he walked to the railway station. It is true that the view there was finer than almost anywhere else. He was standing under the portico, and looking across the river, when some one

brushed past him with some boxes, and Morrison saw that they were addressed to Austerfield. The name startled him—so did the thought that Austerfield was only twenty miles off. What if he were to go there?—the train was just starting—he could stay there all night, spend a long day, and then come back to St. Hilda's and pack his pictures, and return to London. In five minutes, he was on his way—in an hour and a half he was there. He had not seen the village since he was fifteen—it had disappointed him then, he did not expect to admire it more now, but nevertheless he had a strong wish to go there.

Next day he came back, having spent a long morning in visiting every field which he and Olive had frequented as children, and in gathering nearly every flower which he could find in them. These he packed in a basket, which he carried to the station, and at once dispatched to her.

He was walking along the quay to his lodgings, when he saw the two Keithleys in a carriage. He stopped to speak, and was shocked to see that Miss Keithley looked very ill—almost as ill as her aunt. "I have been wishing so to see you!" cried he. "May I not do so sometimes?"

"Oh certainly," said Miss Keithley kindly. The older lady began to say something which did not sound so encouraging. He pretended not to hear it—he was determined not to let her be offended with him without a cause—he would insist on hearing what was amiss and set it straight at once.

"You are going home now?" said he, "may I come in for a few minutes presently? I want to bring you these primroses," he added, showing a large bunch which he had in his hand, and which, up to that moment, he had most certainly meant to keep for himself. "I have been in the country—I had no idea they were out till I saw them."

His visit was accepted, and he went. Mrs. Keithley received him. "My niece is tired," said she; "you will kindly excuse her."

Morrison thought this very odd—he fancied that he could observe that Mrs. Keithley wished to prevent his renewing his acquaintance with her niece. "I was sorry to see that

Miss Keithley looked very pale," said he; "I trust she has not been seriously ill?"

"She has been rather ill," replied the lady, in a manner which distinctly showed that she wished to cut his inquiries short.

"Has she been able to go on with her picture?"

"No, I don't think she has done much to it—but I don't know much about what she does before I am up."

"Oh, by the by," exclaimed Morrison, who was determined not to be frozen by Mrs. Keithley until he had said all that he wished. "One thing I should like to beg her not to give up, and that is her music! I had no idea that Miss Keithley was such a musician. From something that my landlady told me I am very much afraid that Miss Keithley has denied herself the pleasure of using her piano on my account. It is very kind of her to think of me, but will you be so kind as to tell her that I am passionately fond of music, and hers could never be anything but a delight to me." Seeing that Mrs. Keithley's aspect was severely cold, he continued, "I speak in this way because Mrs. Pickering told me that Miss Keithley did not play because she was afraid of disturbing me. I feel extremely sorry if this is really the case."

"Rose always does think far too much about other people! It is very foolish of her—it's ridiculous. No one thanks her for it!"

"I thank her most sincerely! She meant to do me a great kindness."

A faint indication of a desire to sneer appeared on Mrs. Keithley's thin lips. Morrison saw it, and said hastily, "Mrs. Keithley, I wish you would tell me why you are angry with me?"

"I am not angry with you—young people know their own minds best." Here she paused as if intending to say no more, but suddenly, as if in spite of herself, she burst out with, "However, I should have thought that intimate as we were and seeing each other so frequently, and you engaged, too, to come in after tea that very evening—it was not quite the thing—not exactly in the best of taste,

to go off as you did and stay away so long, and never send a line to explain your conduct until nearly a week had passed by."

"But, Mrs. Keithley, I told you in my letter from London—I am very sorry if I was so long in writing it—I did not know I was—my head was so full of other things—I told you in that letter that I had been unexpectedly called away to London. I really don't see why that should make any difference in your kindness to me."

"Well, I don't know, I am sure.—In my young days, young gentlemen did not run after young ladies, and take long, solitary walks with them, and come to see them almost every night of their lives, and seem to be so happy in their company, unless they meant something by it. You say that your head was so full of something else that you forgot to write to us for nearly a week. Now I say that, considering how you had been going on here, your head had no business to be full of anything else! However, though we might be foolish when you were here before, don't say that we had anything to do with bringing you back now. You can't say that we have either of us lifted a finger to bring you back this time!"

Morrison was so amazed that he could not speak. The thought which first came into his mind was, Is it possible that Miss Keithley knows that her aunt is speaking thus? The idea was horrible to him—but he dismissed it as impossible. He drew a long breath of utter dismay. He had a chivalrous veneration for all women—he would have sacrificed much that he cared for rather than Mrs. Keithley should have dropped thus from the high place he assigned to her in common with the rest of her sex.

"You surprise me," said he. "I had no idea whatever that I was behaving ill. I have a great regard for Miss Keithley. I did not think it wrong to show that I had. Circumstances threw us together more intimately than is usually the case, but I do not feel that I have behaved ill. Does she think that I have?"

"No, of course not. At least, I have no idea what she thinks. She is a meek-spirited, uncomplaining creature,

just made as it would appear to have her heart broken. So am I. In a general way, I am as meek as the rest, but when it comes to ruining the happiness of any one whom I love as I love my niece Rosamond, I must say what I think."

"May I ask if Miss Keithley knows that you are speaking to me on this subject?"

"Certainly not! She would never forgive me if she did! It would kill her. I should never have dreamed of saying anything to you if you had not brought it on yourself, but you appear to wish to come back as usual, and the only way to prevent it seems to be to let you know why I don't wish it."

Before he could speak, the door opened and Miss Keithley came in. She had been requested to absent herself, but had been seized by a sudden fear that her aunt, whose sentiments with regard to Mr. Morrison she well knew, might be so unguarded as to express them to him. She glanced uneasily from Mrs. Keithley to Morrison—she saw by their faces that they had been talking very earnestly, and on some subject from which they could not readily divert their minds; she felt ready to sink into the earth with shame. Mrs. Keithley was conscious that she had gone too far, and said, "Now, Mr. Morrison, as my niece is here, you had better say to her what you have just been saying to me—about the music, I mean."

Morrison gladly seized on this chance of concealing the unpleasant situation, and heartily thanked Miss Keithley for her thoughtfulness. She began to think that she had alarmed herself in vain, and that they had not been talking about anything so very particular after all. She spoke to him with her usual kindness, and he had no difficulty in perceiving that she did not wish him to feel that he had in any way behaved ill to her. He rose to take leave. Mrs. Keithley looked uncomfortably conscious of what she had said, but could find nothing to say which would retrieve her position. When Morrison shook hands with her he sincerely hoped that it was for the last time. Not so when he held out his hand to Miss Keithley. As she placed hers in his, she said, "I must bid you good-by for some time,

Mr. Morrison. I am leaving St. Hilda's the day after to-morrow—I am going to London to stay with my Aunt Ullathorne."

"In Kensington Square?" cried he in great surprise.

"No, in Bethnal Green—her husband is rector of St. Dionysius." And Morrison went back to his lodgings thinking, "Rosamond Keithley is a far-away cousin of Olive's!"

All through that long evening his thoughts ran in the same groove in which they had run the night before he went to London and to Olive. Would that he had never gone! He had then made up his mind that it would in every way be well for him to give his love to Rosamond Keithley. What had he gained by violently breaking away from that decision? Nothing, so far as Olive was concerned, and when Miss Keithley's white face rose up before his mind's eye, he was afraid that even if he had gained anything, his gain would have been a loss. What would his future life be to him if, so long as it lasted, he had to turn his thoughts away from one part of his past, as too painful to dwell on? Henceforth he would always feel that a stain rested on his honor. He had thoughtlessly enjoyed the good which came in his way, without considering any one but himself. He, a man whose heart was filled with love for another woman, had no right to seek the society of any girl so constantly as he had sought that of Rose Keithley. Night after night, he had gone to her house, and she must naturally have felt that she herself was the object of his visits. He certainly would not have gone to see that aunt!

He had behaved very ill, and he knew it. Olive was hopelessly beyond his reach, he knew that too; but how bitter it was to be obliged by honor thus suddenly to take a step which would irrevocably part him from her! It was his duty to take it. He sat down and wrote a letter to Miss Keithley, folded it, and sealed it, and then he put it in his pocket and went out. For an hour or more he walked up and down the pier in the cold moonlight; the strongest wish of his heart was at war with this equally

strong fiat of his conscience. He had made up his mind before to try to win her love, but he had meant to do it gradually, testing his own feelings as he went on, and being careful not to do or say anything which would make it dishonorable for him to turn back, if he found they were insufficient. But now all was to be done at one plunge. He was at once to relinquish the dream of his life, which, even though he knew it was only a dream, had been a delight to him and must be a delight no longer; there was no help for it. It was after midnight, and he walked slowly home, and as he passed the Keithleys' door he noiselessly dropped his note in the letter-box. She would not know that it was there until next morning, but he would have the satisfaction of feeling that the thing was now beyond his control. "I have done what is right," thought he, as he entered his own door, "but as long as I live, I'll never see that odious aunt of hers again!"

It was late in the afternoon next day, and no answer had come to his note. "She must have seen it," he thought. "Surely she could have written an answer of some sort." He went out, thinking, as he did so, that when he returned he would see a square note lying in the center of his sitting-room table, and that on that note much depended. He chose the pier for his walk, because it was often the loneliest place in St. Hilda's. It was entirely deserted now. He walked along enjoying the bright wintry sunshine, which shone on the white crests of the waves as they eagerly bounded in. He walked quite to the end of the pier before he saw that one person besides himself was there. Miss Keithley was leaning over the wall watching something so intently, that she did not know he was near her until he spoke. "What is it that you are looking at so earnestly?" said he, but before she could answer, he saw for himself what it was. The tide was high, and two or three fishing-boats which had gone out the evening before, were taking advantage of it to come in, but while they themselves were still hidden from sight by the curve of the pier, their shadows were strongly thrown on the wall of the other pier, opposite. Spectral boats, manned by

spectral sailors, danced buoyantly in, and soon came the real boats of which they were the precursors.

"Are they not pretty?" said she, "but they are rather ghost-like."

"Very!" said he, and then he added abruptly, "You have not answered my letter!"

"I could not," said she quietly. "It took me by surprise. I do not feel that you care for me in that way!" She did not look in his face, but her own showed that she was suffering acutely. "I am so afraid that my aunt said something to you yesterday which made you feel that you ought to do this. It was very wrong of her if she did, both wrong and absurd!"

He could not bear to see her distress, and said hastily, "Do you remember the last walk we had together, from Rastwick Nab, I mean?"

"Yes, perfectly," said she.

"Well, the night after that I made up my mind that the best thing I could do for my own happiness was to ask you to be my wife."

"For your own happiness?" she asked eagerly. She was in such terror lest Mrs. Keithley should have impressed on him that this step was necessary for hers.

"Yes, for my own happiness, I thought so then, and I think so still. Now what do you say?"

"I say, yes," said she, in a low but very distinct voice, and she laid her hand in his. He closed on it in a firm grasp while he said very fervently, "And I will try to be worthy of you."

He did not go to see her that evening; he felt as if he could never endure to see her aunt again, but next morning he went to the station to see her off. She looked very pretty and happy; in her hand were the primroses he had gathered at Austerfield. He felt very strange. They were Olive's primroses, gathered in fields sacred to all true and loving memory of her, and he had given them to another. He himself was Olive's, and he had given himself to another too, but as he walked back to Mrs. Pickering's he still felt that he could not have done otherwise.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Be thou armed for some unhappy words.

Taming of the Shrew.

LADY BROOKE had engaged lodgings in Welbeck Street. She had no longer a house or a carriage and good old servants at her disposal, but was left to her own resources. She was, however, happy in the thought that the work which she had come to England to do, was done, and well done, and that in ten days more she would be on her way back to India. One morning Mrs. Vincent Raymond came to take her shopping. As the two ladies had a good deal to say to each other, they left Olive at home. "She looks ill, Honora," observed Mrs. Raymond, who caught sight of Olive, as she watched their departure from the window. "Is she anxious about this new love-affair of hers? He is sure to propose, isn't he?"

"Quite sure, I should say. When a man of his age takes a fancy to a girl, he is usually very much in earnest. He will make her a far better husband than Sir John Ellerton would have done. I am very glad she would have nothing to say to him." The two ladies were referring to Mr. Ardrossan, whose visits had of late been very frequent.

Hardly had Olive been alone for ten minutes, before Lady Ellerton was announced. She had passed Mrs. Raymond's carriage in Oxford Street, and had seen the two ladies with their worldly heads bent together in the most earnest conversation, on which she had instantly resolved to make use of this opportunity of finding Olive alone. Olive was delighted to see her. She had long been most anxious to know if she was forgiven, and she saw forgiveness in every line of Lady Ellerton's face.

This visit was a great comfort to Olive, who went back to her music glad to think that she was pardoned. The door opened suddenly. She had been so intent on what she was doing, that she had not heard the bell. Mr. Ar-

drossan came in. He looked strange, and Olive saw in a moment that he had not come to pay a mere ordinary visit.

"You are alone?" said he, coming rapidly forward; "I was told you were. Miss Brooke, can you come with me at once to Bethnal Green? I have found the person of whom we have been so long in search,—at least, I have found some one who is as important as she." Olive's heart seemed to flutter and stand still—she looked too much astonished to speak.

"Don't lose a moment. She wants to see you, and I promised to take you at once. Just fling a shawl round you—my carriage is waiting, and we must lose no time."

"Is she dying?" said Olive with great hesitation.

"No, not exactly—I mean she will live some days longer, but she is dying." Olive was ready directly.

"Back to Mulberry Street," cried Mr. Ardrossan, and in another moment they were on their way. This had come so suddenly that poor Olive was almost ill with the shock. She sat with hands clenched together in the effort to bear the excitement quietly, but her eyes were anxiously fixed on Mr. Ardrossan. He grasped her hand for a moment reassuringly, and said, "Have no fear. I will tell you all that I know myself. Parnell—he is the Scripture reader—Parnell and I went on making inquiries, and as we had been so unsuccessful, and as you were still so certain that Mulberry Street was the right address, I began to puzzle my brains and try to think of every possible thing which could be working against us. You had told me that this Hannah Deanham said that she could supply ample proof of the innocence of the person in whom you were interested. She had therefore probably been a lady's maid, or nurse, in your relative's family. She did not wish you to come to Mulberry Street, you said, but to communicate with her by letter. She had therefore some reason for keeping you away from her home or lodgings, and though she signed herself Hannah Deanham, perhaps did not give you the name by which she was known there. Hannah Deanham may have been her maiden name, and she may have had two reasons for giving it to you—one

to prevent your finding her in Mulberry Street if you went there to seek her, and the other to inspire you with confidence. I mean, supposing that you had gone to any one who was acquainted with some of the circumstances which this woman professed to desire to tell you, and had asked if any one of the name of Deanham was ever a servant in the house, you would naturally have received an answer in the affirmative, which would have made you inclined to trust her. This seemed the obvious reason, but I could not help letting my mind dwell on her odd prohibition. Why should she tell you not to go to Mulberry Street? There seemed to be no reason why she should wish to keep you away but one, and that was that there was some one there who was either extremely desirous that you should remain in ignorance of the things which this Hannah Deanham was offering to tell, or else much more anxious to do what was right and to tell the whole truth than she was herself. I fastened on the latter supposition at once, and acted promptly on the new idea. Hannah Deanham had a companion whom she did not wish you to see. Parnell and I began to look in every direction for a woman who had been a lady's maid in a gentleman's family and who was now living in Mulberry Street with some mother, or aunt, or sister. We did not seem to be on the right track till yesterday, when we heard of a poor woman who is very ill indeed, and who seems to have no one to attend to her. She is a thorough invalid and will never be well. She was nursed by a sister, it seems, until lately; but I find that on the 7th of February this woman took it into her head to go off to America. Her name was Hannah—Hannah Wilkinson, and she had never said anything about going to America to the people in the house with her until just before she went."

Olive started. The 7th of February was the day on which Lady Brooke had gone to Liverpool to take leave of a friend who was starting for America. "The 7th of February is the day I myself went to Bethnal Green to find Hannah Deanham—how strange that that should be the day she left! But I should not have been allowed

to go if she had still been there," thought she, remembering Lady Brooke's indifference to her movements that morning.

"Yes, but she went by the name of Hannah Wilkinson when there, and probably that is her name now—she is a widow."

"Tell me one thing," said Olive imploringly; "you have found the sister, tell me, was my feeling true—is my moth—can this sister prove what I want her to prove?"

He looked very kindly in her face, and said, "I think so—I hope so—she says she can; but, dear Miss Brooke, I have respected your secret—I have not allowed her to speak of it to me. She told me that she could not die in peace until she had revealed a secret which has ruined the happiness of an innocent woman. Her great wish was to see you quickly, so I came for you at once."

"Thank God, my prayer is heard!" said Olive, and she covered her face with her hands and spoke no more until the carriage stopped, when she said in a frightened whisper, "Are we there?"

He reverently helped her to get out of the carriage, drew her hand within his arm, and took her up a very narrow, dark and dirty staircase. He did not stop until they came to the door of a room on the third floor. Olive's heart sank lower and lower, and when he said, "I will just speak to her and go and wait for you in the carriage," she could have grasped his arm in her terror, and have begged him not to go out of her sight; but for her mother's sake she was brave. He took off his hat and knocked at the door. No one came, so he half opened it, and through the opening Olive caught a glimpse of a poorly-furnished, miserable-looking room. A square of faded carpet lay on a by no means clean floor, a chest of drawers stood between two small, uncleaned windows. On the top of it was a toilet-cover placed awry, a looking-glass whose frame had given way, a shell-box and a cracked bottle full of yellow drinking-water. Mr. Ardrossan stood before Olive and was speaking to some one inside. "Mrs. Gardiner," said he, "here is Miss Brooke. She did not

lose a minute in coming to you when she heard that you had such a wish to speak to her." He took Olive's hand and led her in, and then she saw a pale, wasted old woman, tightly wrapped in a shawl which had been so often washed that all trace of its original color or pattern had disappeared, and now it was a mere dingy gray. She was lying propped up with pillows on a gayly-painted iron bed. Her hair, which was pure white, was drawn back under a close-fitting white cap. Her face was a delicate oval, and there was a certain amount of refinement in her features; but her eyes, once blue, were now dull and glazed, and she seemed to be half blind. She turned to where Olive was standing and said, "But I don't see her, sir. I see a lady there beside you, but she may be anybody. Come close, miss, close—if you are like your mother I shall know you at once."

Much as Olive shrank from the neighborhood of a woman who had, as she believed, betrayed her poor mother so cruelly, she forced herself to go nearer to this unfortunate creature, who thrust her wan face within an inch or two of her own, and peered into it with those terrible eyes which seemed to be more than half dead already. She gazed thus for some time, and even stretched out a shrivelled hand to touch Olive's hair. Olive shuddered, but a warning glance from Mr. Ardrossan urged her to control her terror.

"It's the same face. It's the same hair. Oh, many's the time that I have seen her go out dressed for a ball and have felt sure that no angel in heaven would be more beautiful. What she must have suffered!" And as she said this, the unhappy woman began to weep convulsively. Two tears ran slowly down Olive's white face. She was standing by Mr. Ardrossan—by a look he tried to comfort her.

"You must not think that I have brought you here to waste your time in watching me cry," said Mary Gardiner at length. "No, I have prayed for this chance, and I've got it. I don't want to go into the Lord's presence with a crime on my conscience which I was too hard-hearted to

own to when I was alive. No good will come of owning it now, but the Lord above us well knows that that's none of my fault."

"You had better try to collect your thoughts, so as to be able to tell Miss Brooke exactly what you wish her to know. I will leave you now, Miss Brooke; you will find me in the carriage—I will wait as long as you like." And as Mr. Ardrossan said this, his eye wandered round the scantily-furnished room in search of a chair for Olive. Having found one, he left them, and then Mrs. Gardiner spoke.

"Miss Brooke, your name is Olive?"

"Yes," replied Olive, faintly.

"I know it is, I was your nurse. I was your mother's too—not from the beginning, but from the time when she was kind of growed up. I went to Wilburton Hall which was her home when she was ten years old, and Miss Alice eight. I left it with your mother about ten years after, when she married. I knew all her family, I remember the young gentleman who first courted her, whom we all thought she was going to marry. His name was Lilburn, he was as handsome a gentleman as ever stepped, and well liked by every one, especially by us servants, and Miss Dorothy would have married him if Captain Brooke had not come forward. Not that his coming forward made your poor mother think less of Mr. Lilburn who was her own choice. She was as fond of him as ever, but her father and mother thought that there was no comparison between the two gentlemen, and did their best to show Mr. Lilburn that he was not wanted. They made her give him up and marry Captain Brooke, and I went away with her as her maid. Captain Brooke was a very kind gentleman and fond of her, and, poor lady, she did her best to seem happy. I often think that they would have ended by being as happy a couple as any you see, if Miss Honora Calthorpe had not stayed so much in the house with them." (Olive clenched her hands—she had felt this—she had known this from the very beginning.)

"She was a school-friend of your mother's, and had spent

months upon months with her at Wilburton. She was at the wedding as chief bridesmaid, and there was not a servant in the house who did not say when they came home from church that day, that one of the bridesmaids would have liked to change places with the bride. There had been a great deal of talk about Miss Honora and Captain Brooke all along. Some of us maintained that she was very deep in love with him. She had been so, it was said, before she found out that he did not come to Wilburton for the sake of seeing her, but her friend Miss Dorothy Ainsley, and when Miss Honora did discover the truth, she still hoped to turn him into a lover for herself, because your mother, poor lady, was set on marrying this other gentleman. Miss Honora was terribly disappointed when she lost Captain Brooke, and could not quite hide it, but it is my belief she felt nothing but the loss of his money and good prospects, for it was not in her to trouble herself much about any man who was not well off. Anyhow she should never have set her foot in the house if I had been able to keep her out, but your mother was always kind to her—more's the pity, for she suffered for it. Miss Honora came far too much between husband and wife, and though she was supposed to be your mother's friend she always played the part of being your father's. When trouble came, she sided with him altogether, though none could have known so well as she how hard the poor young thing had tried to be a good, true wife."

"Mrs. Gardiner," sobbed Olive, who felt utterly cast down by these words, "you are not going to tell me that my dear mother was not a good wife?"

"Indeed I am not. She did not love your father as a wife ought to do, but he knew that when he married her—he was not deceived—he would have her, but as for her being a bad wife in any other way, she was not, and I can prove it."

Olive almost shrieked, "You can? You are sure? I knew all that was said against her was false—but how can we prove it was?—it is so terrible not to be able to do that!"

"I can do it, Miss Olive," said Mrs. Gardiner faintly but firmly.

"Oh, why did you not speak at the time, then? Why did you let her be condemned?" groaned Olive.

The sick woman shook her head, and said, "You shall hear how it was—wait, Miss Olive, until I tell you all."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Well excused,
That thou didst love her, strikes some scores away
From the great compt.—*All's Well that Ends Well.*

"TELL me all, then," said Olive, in a voice which no one would have recognized as hers.

"I will, but my story will be a long one, and I have hardly strength to tell it. Six months after you were born, your father had to return to India, but your mother was not well enough to go with him. Your Uncle Frederick came to London to stay with her, and that's what brought on all the trouble. He was a very kind young gentleman, but oh dear, he was a foolish one! One bad thing which he did was to bring to the house that young Lilburn who had been engaged to your mother. It was terrible thoughtless of him, but he did it. Your mother, poor lady, let your father know that Mr. Lilburn was coming a great deal to see her, and your father he put his foot down at once, and said he would not have it! So Mr. Lilburn was informed that he must come no more. Poor gentleman, he went away telling your mother that as long as he lived he would go through fire and water to serve her, but he looked broken-hearted. The next thing silly Mr. Frederick did, was something he had given his father a faithful promise he never would do, sign a bill for a friend. Major Clinton, that was his friend's name, told Mr. Frederick that putting his name to the bill was a mere form, that the money he was signing for would never by any chance be required of him, and young Mr. Frederick, who ought to

have had more thought of his promise, did sign, and then troubled himself no more about it. Three months afterwards, he received a letter to say that the bill would be due on the 15th and must be paid on the 18th—they gave him three days' grace. I was sitting in your mother's room, with you, my sweet innocent, on my knee, when Mr. Frederick he danced into the room crying out, 'Oho! oho! Here's a nice bit of reading for a timid young, faint-hearted gentleman to sit down and enjoy!' and your mother, she took the letter and thought it very serious, but your uncle he caught it out of her hand and told her not to behave like a great baby who did not understand business—he understood business himself, he said, and knew that this letter meant nothing. It had only been sent to him because he had signed the bill, but a similar notice had of course been sent to Major Clinton, who had drawn it. Major Clinton was the man who had to make the payment, he said,—he himself had nothing to do with it. Then your poor, dear, anxious mother looked up and said, 'Go to Major Clinton, dear Fred, and then you will be quite sure that he understands his part of the transaction.' At first Mr. Frederick would not, but she said so much to him that next day he did go. He went away whistling and tossing up his cap, but he came back looking a changed man, for Major Clinton had left the country, and it was pretty clear that he had taken himself off because he could not meet this bill. Your uncle was told that he must pay the thousand pounds or be made bankrupt, but though he had not fifty pounds in the world, he was more afraid of his father's getting to know what had happened than of anything else. He ran upstairs to his own room and locked the door, and your mother ran after him, for he had said something which made her afraid that he was going to shoot himself. He would not open the door at first, but at last she got into the room and did her best to comfort him by telling him that she knew quite well how to raise the money, but he just lay on the bed as if he had no hope left. She, poor thing, was ready at once with a plan to help him. She got together every bit of jewelry she had, and some of

her things were really splendid. She tumbled all these into a bag and made my sister Hannah, who was her maid, now that I was nurse, go with her to see if she could not raise the money on them. Poor lady, her feet were not made for going such errands, but she went to a jeweler's shop, and said what she came to do. She was terrified when the man looked at her very suspiciously, as if he thought she had perhaps stolen what was in the bag, and asked for her name and address. 'I don't see that you need know that,' she said. 'Just count up what these jewels are worth, and let me have their value. I know they are very valuable.'

"'We must have your name and address, madam,' repeated the man, and he pulled out a book to write it down. 'What we do is this, we take your address, and then we seal up your parcel with a note of the price which we intend to give, written outside it, and return it to you while we make inquiries. If, in the mean time, you break the seal, we retract our offer.'

"'But why should you do that?' said my lady. 'Why should my breaking the seal make any difference?'

"'Because we should know that the contents of the parcel had been offered elsewhere.'

"'But if you do all this, when can I have the money?'

"'If you could call again in a few days' time—'

"'Too late!' cried your poor mother, 'you must let me have the money at once.'

"'It is our way of doing business,' said the jeweler, with great indifference, and no more than that could be got from him.

"'They will all say the same thing to us, Hannah,' said your mother to my sister, as much disappointed she left the shop. Hannah told her that the pawnbrokers were the best people to go to, but the poor lady shook her head. Presently she recollected Mr. Lilburn, and that he had said he would go through fire and water to serve her, so she made up her mind to go and ask him either to sell the jewels for her or to pawn them. She and Hannah saw him. Hannah never left your mother all the time she was talking to him.

Hannah stayed with her while she waited in his room till he came back with the money. He was away for an hour or so, and after all was not able to get it that day, but said he would give it to them the next, if they could come again at the same time. Hannah and your mother did go next day, and again Hannah never left the room; and yet when the trial came, and they accused your mother, poor innocent lady, of spending hours alone with Mr. Lilburn in the hotel where he was living, Hannah actually let it be said, and swore that they had been alone together all the time, on both occasions !”

“But,” cried Olive, “when so many people knew the truth, why did no one speak? Who first brought such a wicked accusation?”

“I do not know. Miss Honora was the one who had the most to say about it. I shall always believe that she was the one to write and tell your father what had happened, and to persuade Hannah to say that your mother and Mr. Lilburn had been so long alone together.”

“But why did my Uncle Frederick not speak? He knew the truth, and should have told it.”

“He was dead, Miss Olive! He shot himself before your poor mother so much as got the money.” Olive shuddered. What a terrible tragedy she was hearing!

“Yes,” said Mary Gardiner, “that is what he did. He was afraid of his father’s anger.”

“But why did my mother not make the whole story known? She could have brought witnesses to prove it.”

“Poor dear lady,” said Mary Gardiner, speaking with great difficulty, “she could not do anything as she ought to have done it. She seemed as if she couldn’t think or didn’t care. Your uncle’s death nearly killed her, she was quite out of her mind at the time, and then when she was recovering that, this new trouble came; and when she found that your father doubted her truth, she never held up her head again.”

“And they still went on with the trial?”

“Yes, the servants all thought it was gone on with that master might marry Miss Honora. She had been

coming and going all the time. I thought then she must be plotting something with Hannah. I know she did now."

"You say that this Hannah swore to something which she knew to be false. What were you about to let her do it?"

"Miss Olive," cried the poor woman in a voice of great agony, "you may well ask that; but what could I have done? You see I knew nothing but what Hannah herself chose to tell me. At first she told me that she had never left them alone, but when I reminded her of that afterwards, she said I had made a great mistake, for she had never told me that she had stayed with them, and that I must please to remember that she would be put on her oath at the trial, so she was not at all likely to say what was untrue. At last I did not know what to think."

"Then how did you find out that she had sworn falsely?"

"I first suspected it by this. Hannah, who always spent her wages as she went along, had all at once money enough to pay her and my passage out to Australia, and to set us up there in a good business. Why were both of us to go so far away, and where did the money come from to take us? I began to make sure that it came from Miss Honora, who was so anxious to get your father for a husband that she was quite willing to give handsome presents to any one who helped her."

"But all this is mere supposition," said Olive, sadly and very hopelessly.

"No, it is not! It is more than that. Years afterwards, when Hannah and I were both well married, she owned it. She said she had done a very good deed, and it was nothing to be at all sorry for. She said your father had by this time most likely got a wife who really loved him, which he had not got before, and that your mother had no doubt recovered her senses, and had then been only too glad to find herself divorced, and free to marry Mr. Lilburn, who was the only man she had ever loved. I have three or four letters Hannah wrote, all telling me this. She and I did

not live in the same place after we were married, and I had many troubles. I had never been really easy about your poor mother's trial. I had always had a secret fear that she had not had fair play. After I had buried three children—all the children I ever had—I fell into quite a low way, and used to sit thinking of them and of your mother, and of what she must be suffering if she had recovered her mind, at having her only child taken from her; I wrote to Hannah about this over and over again, and told her I was sure she had forsworn herself, and begged her to confess, and that was why she wrote those letters."

Olive at once pounced on the chance of obtaining a bit of direct evidence. "You say you have these letters, Mrs. Gardiner?" cried she.

"Yes, I have them. They are hidden away in a very safe place. When Hannah was here I was afraid of her getting hold of them, and since she left I have never been well enough to walk across the room to the place where they are."

"Let me get them," said Olive anxiously. "Mrs. Gardiner, you will let me have those letters? you ought."

"Yes, you shall have them, Miss Olive—I intend you to have them; but never mind about them now—let me get on with my story. I feel faint—last time I fainted was after Hannah went, and I did not come rightly to myself for days."

"Let me get you the letters, and then you can go on with what you are telling me—you see, the letters are so important."

"My story is important too, and you had better let me tell you the end of it while I can—I can't say much more—I am well-nigh spent. The doctor says if I faint again I shall most likely not come out of the fit alive, so you had better let me make a finish."

"Oh do let me get the letters," pleaded Olive. "If you were to faint, or be ill again, I should never get them." Even while she was speaking, Olive feared that she had lost her opportunity of securing them. Mary Gardiner seemed to be lapsing into this dreaded state of uncon-

sciousness. Her eyes were closing heavily, and her head sinking low down on her breast. The poor woman was exhausted by her long story—that, and the excitement of dwelling on these painful recollections, were overpowering her. Olive got up to see if she could find anything in the shape of refreshing food. A dusty, brown teapot was on the hearth, and a still dustier kettle stood beside it. She placed this on the handful of red cinders which did duty for a fire. Mary Gardiner had recovered a little, and when Olive turned round after doing this, she saw her poor, faint eyes fixed on her with a renewal of intelligence in their glance. It was only for a moment, but the sight made her hopeful. “Now that I am on my feet,” said she, “let me give you those letters. Don’t think of tiring yourself by talking any more until you have had a cup of nice, warm tea.” Mary Gardiner did not look as if she would ever speak again—her head was once more nodding on her breast. Olive was very anxious, but earnestly hoped that this was nothing more alarming than a momentary attack of sleep. She stood silently watching her, and waiting till the kettle would boil. Suddenly Mary Gardiner awoke with a start and looked eagerly around; the eyes were too weak to see across the room. Olive spoke, and a look of intense relief came over the sick woman’s face—she had feared that her listener was gone. “Yes, get the letters, Miss Olive,” said she, answering the question which had not until this moment penetrated to her mind. “They are in a little, flat box which is squeezed tightly in between the back of that chest of drawers and the wall. The key is here, safe under my pillow. Push your hand into the bed—feel well about, and you’ll find it.”

Olive found both box and key, and that done, gave Mary Gardiner the tea which she had prepared for her. Inside the box were three or four old letters tied together by a black ribbon.

“Take them all. Read them when you get home. They are all from Hannah. She has asked me about them more than once since we came back here, and, may the Lord forgive me, I said they were burnt. You will

see that she owns she took a false oath—it's all there, but you shouldn't have been in such a hurry for the letters, Miss Olive; you might have waited till I'd got my story told. It's a chance I ever finish it now."

"Why do you wish to tell it now, after keeping silence so long?" asked Olive doubtfully, afraid lest after all there might be some flaw in this woman's truth.

"Did I not tell you that I had been wanting it told all along? You will see that, when you go through those letters. Would you have me die with such a crime on my conscience?"

"But you did not commit it."

"I did not. Not for worlds would I have done such a thing, but I had a good guess what Hannah must be doing. She changed her story so much, and she was so often closeted with Miss Honora; and though she pretended that it was all about doing their very best to bring poor mistress's mind back, I felt sure it couldn't be about that. I did not commit the crime—I know that—but I let it be committed without telling my secret thoughts, and besides that, I profited by it. Hannah and I went to Australia with money enough to keep us respectable all our days, even if we had not married—though, mind you, I had nothing but what she gave me."

"Why did you come back to England?"

"Hannah came back because she had run through all the money she took out with her, and wanted the new Lady Brooke to start her off again with some more. She wrote to her to England, and the letter had to be sent all the way to India, and Lady Brooke never answered it. It turns out now, that she came home on purpose to speak to Hannah instead of writing. Lady Brooke is not one to put what's dangerous on paper. When Hannah got no answer, she set off home. I fancy she thought to herself, if the one side would not give her money to hold her tongue, the other might to make her speak. She never said that to me, for she knew how I wanted her to confess. She didn't want me to come home with her, but my husband was dead as well as hers, so I thought I'd come. I

let her have no peace all the way home about telling the truth. I said if she didn't, I would. She said she would, and she wrote to you. She was very much afraid of my writing to you, but my health broke down on the way home, and I could not write, and she would not let you be brought here. That's what makes me think she never really wished you to know this, unless you showed yourself willing to give her money for telling. Lady Brooke got hold of her letter to you, and met her instead of you, and she gave her five hundred pounds to go to America with a cousin of ours, but Hannah never told Lady Brooke I was still alive and here in London. Hannah left me fifty pounds of Lady Brooke's money. It is more than I shall ever want."

"Then you have again taken money for holding your tongue?"

"Miss Olive, I did not want to hold my tongue! My only wish was to do what was right."

"Then why did you not write to me?"

"Because I was anxious you should be happy. I should never have lifted a finger to bring you here if the Scripture reader had not told me you wished to speak to me. Hannah told me before she left that I should do terrible harm if I did speak; for you, Miss Olive, were just going to marry a very rich and high-up gentleman, who would not like to have this old disgrace raked up again, and besides that, she said it was of no use to rake it up, for all those who had suffered by what had been done were dead and gone. I knew myself that Mr. Frederick had shot himself, and that Mr. Lilburn had died in the West Indies soon after the trial, and Hannah told me about your mother dying in a private lunatic asylum ten years ago; and she said over and over again that speaking now would only make your father end his days in misery, and perhaps be the cause of your great match being broken off."

"They have deceived you again," cried Olive, "all this is untrue. My dear mother is not dead—I saw her ten months ago, and I am not going to be married."

"Miss Olive, is that true?" cried Mary Gardiner, in dismay.

"It is perfectly true."

"Deceived again! Left here to die alone, with not a single soul to tell me a word of truth! And every penny I spend is got by letting their wickedness go on! I am living on the price of innocent blood! Come what will, I'll not do that! Miss Olive, put your hand once more under my pillow—you will feel a paper parcel."

Olive obeyed, and with some difficulty found what she wanted. "Open, it, please," said the poor woman, faintly. Inside it were nine five-pound notes and a couple of sovereigns. "That's what's left of her fifty pounds—Lady Brooke's fifty pounds. Take them, Miss Olive, and give them to her. They came from her, and they shall go back to her—food that's bought with that money shall never cross my lips again—no, not if I die for want of it."

Olive stood motionless.

"Take it, Miss Olive,—give it back to her."

Olive burst into tears and cried, "I can never speak to her again!"

"You won't take it for me?" said Mrs. Gardiner, giving way to a feeble passion of tears. With the selfishness of old age and illness, she could only think of her own wishes and feelings. "You refuse? You won't take it?" she wailed.

"I will take it, I will either return it to Lady Brooke, or give it to some poor creature who is in want."

"Do so. Say you forgive me. Say you will pray to God to overlook what I did. It was not my fault; both Hannah and Miss Honora were far too clever for me, that's how it happened."

"I do forgive you," said Olive, who was quietly crying. "I will tell my mother how unhappy you have been, and I will do all that I can for you; but you must do one thing more, you must leave a written confession behind you—it need not be in your own writing, but you must sign it. My mother is alive, and we must have every proof of her innocence."

"Then have it done now. I have talked too much. When to-morrow comes, I don't suppose I shall be alive—if I am, I shan't be fit to do what you want."

"I'll get Mr. Ardrossan to come at once," said Olive, and ran down and told him what she wanted.

"Both Parnell and Dr. Ullathorne are at the Mission-room—there at the end of the street. I'll go and bring them directly. She can make her deposition in their presence; you had better stay in the carriage."

Olive assented faintly, she was completely exhausted. Before he left her she gave him the contents of her purse and said, "Give it to her; she has no money at all."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

And sleep, that sometimes shuts up Sorrow's eye,
Steal me a while from mine own company.

Midsummer Night's Dream.

"TAKE me to my aunt's in Harley Street," said Olive to Mr. Ardrossan when all was done and he rejoined her. "I must never see my step-mother again!" As she spoke she raised her heavy eyes to his, to see if there was any fear of his trying to persuade her to temporize or be patient. She was determined not to adopt either of these courses, but felt as if she had no strength to contend with him. He bowed. He wrapped her in a warm rug, for he saw that she was cold with exhaustion, gently made her lie back, and then said, "You have only to express your wishes—they shall be obeyed." She said no more, but lay back considering with herself what she had better do. She resolved at once to tell all to her uncle, and to beg him to lose no time in freeing her mother's name from dishonor. So far as her own future was concerned she had but one plan—her very life should be given to make her mother happy. She felt an intense satisfaction in the thought that the false Lady Brooke would now be brought down from her high estate, and made to suffer

some of the bitterness of the life to which she had doomed the friend of her youth. When Olive thought of her father, she never considered that he would be pained by what she had discovered; her feeling was that it would remove a mountain of care from his mind to learn that the wife whom he had loved so much had been innocent. Swift justice should overtake the guilty, and then she and her father, and her mother, would for the rest of their days dwell together in love and trust. Thank God, for letting this come to pass. Such were the thoughts that filled her mind all the way home, and she sat looking straight before her with eyes bright but bitter, with flushed cheeks, and lips most firmly set together. Never once did she seem to be aware that she was not alone.

The carriage stopped in Harley Street. Then Mr. Ardrossan spoke. "I shall leave you now, Miss Brooke," said he, "but for heaven's sake do nothing rashly." There was a look of cruel determination in Olive's face which he did not like. "I shall come to see you in the morning, but Dr. Brooke will be your best adviser."

"He must see that justice is done, and done quickly," said Olive firmly. "For twenty years they have kept me from my own mother!"

"You will not act without advice?" said Mr. Ardrossan, anxiously.

"No, I promise you I will not. Good-by, Mr. Ardrossan. As long as I live, I shall never forget your kindness to me." She put her hand in his as she spoke, and grasped it warmly in her gratitude. It lay there a moment, and then he raised it to his lips and said, "God bless you! Look on me as entirely devoted to your service."

She went in to her uncle's house, and without speaking to the servant, opened door after door, until she had penetrated to the sanctuary of the consulting-room. The window was open, a keen March breeze was blowing in, but no one was there. Her eyes turned to the mantel-piece, and she saw that it was four o'clock—an hour when her uncle was never to be found at home—she had imagined

that it was about one. When she left the room, the manservant was still in the hall. Dr. Brooke was out, he said, and would not be back till nine. He had gone down to Brighton to see Miss Lucy, but would be home in time for Mrs. Brooke's reception.

"Oh, it is Tuesday?" said Olive, drearily. She had forgotten that on that evening her aunt held a *salon*.

"This 'amper's for you, ma'am," said John, pointing to a hamper-like basket on the floor. "It came about half an hour ago. Mrs. Brooke said you were expected here to-night, so we need not send it on to Welbeck Street."

"Was I coming here to-night? Oh, I forgot." She forgot everything now but the one all-important fact that her mother was innocent, and that she had the proofs of this in her pocket. She went into the dining-room, took out the packet of letters, and began to read. Each and all proved the truth of what Mary Gardiner had told her. Olive's heart swelled within her as she read. So far as evidence went, these letters were all that could be desired, but for every false word in them she longed to inflict years of torture on the wretches who had behaved so infamously. She pined for her uncle's return; it seemed cruel that she should have to postpone her revenge until he came. She would have liked to go at once to the so-called Lady Brooke, and stripping her of her stolen name, and place, and honor and regard, drive her forth with execration.

She must have been sitting thus for more than an hour when she heard Mrs. Brooke's voice in the hall. "Miss Brooke here, you say, John? Why did you not let me know? Did you tell her that some flowers had come for her? I know they are flowers, because I lifted up the corner of the hamper. If she is in the dining-room, take it in to her." And Mrs. Brooke, who had just pleased herself beyond all expectation in an extremely difficult bit of description, ran into the dining-room, kissed Olive, spread out a newspaper to receive the hamper and flowers, and cut the strings which tied down its lid, without once looking into the poor girl's face; and before she could do

so, she was called away. Before going she threw back the lid of the hamper and revealed a mossy bed in which were wedged eight or ten bunches of primroses, large and bright as none but country-primroses can be, and with luxuriant, crinkly, well-nurtured leaves. Besides these, were dark purple crows'-feet with their black-speckled leaves, and golden muscadine as fresh as when plucked, and daisies and so-called buttercups, and some frail, lilac-streaked anemones. One had its little brown twig-fiber root attached to it, and when Olive saw that, she remembered days long gone by when it was such a grief to her and to Willie when they ran to gather a wood-anemone, and the plant only yielded up its flower with its life. Some time before this recollection came to her she had divined that these flowers came from Austerfield and were sent by him. She had known it instinctively as soon as the hamper was opened. No one but he could have known the delight that such flowers as these would be to her. Most lovingly she handled each bud and leaf and spray, as one by one she lifted them out and placed them in order on the table. The first layer of flowers and moss was removed, and now came some stiff shoots of black-thorn, and branches of softly glistening, small-leaved ivy and twigs of hazel and willow, with faint green catkins, and the large downy gray ones fledged with golden plumage, looking like young ducklings which have just chipped the shell. Everything that could be found at this early season was there, even a small sheaf of Olive's well-remembered pink-sheathed sycamore buds and some closely-shut crosier-shaped fern-leaves. Never in her life had any flowers given her half the delight that these first fruits of spring's dawning gave her now. Her youth, and the thoughts which had filled her mind when her feet had strayed over the fields where these flowers had so lately grown, swept back with a force that well-nigh overpowered the cruelly painful present. The basket was still not empty. Here she had a primrose-root with some of the russet-brown oak-leaves of the year before still clinging to it. They were dry and withered now, but had helped

to build up its warm winter's nest, and what was this beside it? A branch of something with crumpled and half-unfolded leaves of the most tender green. One or two gentle touches of Olive's fingers uncurled them, and then she saw that it was a bit of lime-tree, and she knew the tree which had borne it, and why it had been sent to her. The sight of this, and the sharp contrast between the time when she had not a care in the world and the present, when she had seen and suffered so much—the shame she felt when she remembered that, only a few minutes before, revenge had been almost more in her mind than justice—completely overpowered Olive, and when Mrs. Brooke came back, she found her sitting with her face on the dining-table, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"What is the matter, darling? Don't cry so—don't spoil your beauty. I expect such delightful people here to-night—Olive, you must stop."

But Olive only wept the more, and when she was able to explain what had happened, her aunt did not wonder at her tears. Mrs. Brooke made her go and lie down, gave her some food, and promised most faithfully not to let Lady Brooke penetrate to her place of refuge. Olive relied on her word, and after an hour or two of painful and disturbed thought, fell asleep. The noise of carriage wheels grinding harshly against the curbstone, and the flinging back of the doors of hansom-cabs awoke her. She was lying in the dark in a bedroom which was strange to her, she had not dared to go to her own, lest Lady Brooke should come in search of her, and know where to find her even though told that she desired to be left alone. It was dark, save for the light which came from a gas-lamp in the street. Doors opened and shut, names were loudly announced, voices and sounds of all kinds multiplied, and at length Olive remembered that her aunt was seeing her friends that night, and they were arriving in swift succession.

She lay quite still, and at last her weary eyes closed again and she heard no more. A hand touched her roughly. "Miss Olive! Miss Olive!" said one of the

servants, who was all unconscious of her anguish, "do you happen to know where the cellar-key is?"

Olive started up crying, "What has happened? Is it anything very bad?"

"Oh no, miss. Not bad at all, at least not in the way you think. We can't find the cellar-key nowhere, that's all. Every one of us has been looking for it for more than an hour, in every place we can think of, but we can't find it, do what we will."

Olive felt confused—she had been sleeping very heavily. "Have you asked Mrs. Brooke about it?"

"Yes, miss; she knew it was lost before the company came, for the wine was to have been got out ready, but no key could be found. She said we was just to look about everywhere till we found it, for it couldn't be very far, because she had it at five o'clock. She knows that, for just before she went into the dining-room to speak to you, the cook sent a message to ask for a little rum to flavor her creams, and she got it for her, and then went straight to you in the dining-room, where you was arranging your flowers, and what she did with it then, she does not know. We thought you might have picked it up, Miss Olive."

Olive felt in her pocket, but it was not there, and she had no other suggestion to offer.

"There's not a drop of wine out but what was in the decanters at dinner! Master is sure to be terrible cross about it! John is, I know. He says he would rather have forfeited a whole year's wages than have such a thing happen in any family where he happened to be living at the time. Where can that key have got to?"

Olive went down the back stairs, and by back ways to the dining-room. She was afraid of being seen by some of the gay guests whose voices were now resounding through the house. The dining-room was now the supper-room, and a well-filled table stretched from one end of it to the other. Olive, candle in hand, and aided by the maid, looked under it and all round, but no key was there; and when she stood up again, the brightly sparkling wine-

glasses which seemed destined to remain empty, mocked her by the prominent part which they played in the general effect. At one end of the long table was a prettily arranged group of primroses in tall glasses, and when she saw these she knew that though her aunt might be careless about housekeeping matters, she had kindly remembered to put these treasures into water for her. They suggested a happy thought, and she suddenly exclaimed, "Did Mrs. Brooke put those primroses in water? If she did, she may have thrown away the key with the broken flowers and bits of stalk."

"Yes, she put them in the glasses, and she rolled all the rubbish and dead leaves and things in the paper the hamper was standing on, and stuffed it out of sight inside it."

"Look there then," said Olive, who was anxious to avert from the house this signal disgrace. The girl snatched at the hope and ran away to look, and just as she had gone, there was a loud peal at the bell. "How late some of the people are in coming!" thought Olive, as she drew back within the shelter of the dining-room door. She heard some one with a very sweet voice asking for Dr. Brooke and piteously pleading to be allowed to see him for a moment, even if he had friends. John was stern. In his estimation it enhanced the dignity of the family that he should be so. "Let's them see that master is not short of patients," was what he said when alluding to his peremptory, and unconciliatory manner.

"He is from home, ma'am, one of his own young ladies who is at school at Brighton is not very well, and he has gone there to see her."

"When does he return?" inquired the lady at the door, in great anxiety.

"Some time to-night. It is uncertain," said John, who could not be expected to have much feeling for a lady who had nothing better than a street-cab waiting for her at the door; "you had better call in the morning, between ten and one."

"In the morning!" said the lady, in a voice so sad that

Olive wondered how John could have the heart to resist it. "Oh, do let me wait here a few minutes. I am so anxious to see him, and he may come to-night."

"He couldn't go out again if he did, ma'am. He is not well himself. He never attends night-cases."

The lady said something of which Olive only heard the sound; that voice was somehow well-known to her. She had not heard it for years, but there was something about it which she could never forget. She peeped out, and just within the doorway she saw the lady whom she used to know as Alice, but whom she now knew to be her mother's sister. She was just saying, "Let me wait and ask him to go out myself—you don't seem to think how important it is. It is a case of life or death."

In a moment Olive went to the door, took the lady's hand, led her into the consulting-room, made her sit down, and then flung herself on her knees before her, and cried, "Is it my mother who is ill?"

"She is very ill," said Alice Ainsley; her eyes were swimming with tears.

"Not dying?" said Olive in an awe-struck voice.

"I fear it. I have feared it all day. I came to Dr. Brooke as the last chance of saving her; if you had not come to me I should have lost it."

"Uncle will go to her the moment he returns; you will let me go too, won't you?" she added. "She is my mother."

"You know it then?" said Alice. "You have at last been told."

"I have been told. I know everything. More than any one else, for I know that what was said of her was false. I learnt that to-day and have the proof of it in my pocket."

Alice softly took Olive's hand and said, "If this could have happened before—now, I fear it is too late—oh, how I wish your uncle would come!"

Olive went to the supper-room to see if John was there. He was now putting wine in abundance on the table. "John," said she, "when Dr. Brooke returns, ask him

to come to me in the study at once. Don't let him go upstairs, I mean—make him come to me."

"Bless you, miss, do you know what o'clock it is? It is eleven, and he has been at 'ome an hour or more, and now that the cellar key has been found 'id in the 'amper, the first thing he'll have to do will be to come down to supper."

"Oh no!" cried Olive. "Don't say that supper is ready until he has got away with us. Go upstairs and give him a note from me. Ask him to read it at once," and she hastily took a scrap of paper and wrote, "Come into the study the moment you receive this. It is most important that you should not delay.—OLIVE." "John, if you don't bring Dr. Brooke, I'll go to him myself."

John went sulkily away, declaring to himself that it was quite *hinfra dig* to stay in a place where such 'ole-in-a-corner goings on took place. Olive clung to the doorway for support. Her uncle came immediately. "Olive, my child, what ails you?" said he.

"My mother is ill, perhaps dying. Come to her."

"Your mother is upstairs, and the gayest of the gay."

"Not that creature!" said Olive, with a gesture of horror. "My true mother, I mean. Come to her. You have been sent for."

"Who has sent for me?" said Dr. Brooke, who was so startled that he was confused.

Olive pointed to the study. Dr. Brooke made a step forwards and met Alice.

"Alice!" he exclaimed. "You here?"

"Richard, Dorothy is very ill—her life is in danger. My only hope is in you. Will you come to her?"

"Of course I will," said he.

The cab which had brought Alice Ainsley was still waiting for her, and the three went forth into the darkness together.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

If it were now to die
'Twere now to be most happy; for I fear
My soul hath her content too absolute,
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in an unknown fate.—*Othello.*

O, thou soft, natural death, that art joint-twin
To sweetest slumber!—*Vittoria Corembona.*

THE cab stopped at a house which, so far as Dr. Brooke could judge, was in the neighborhood of Hampstead. "I will go and prepare my sister for your visit," said Alice, opening the door of a down-stairs room. "Will you wait here for a minute or two?" She left them alone, and then Olive whispered, "Uncle, if you were to tell my mother that I have to-day seen a servant of hers who can prove that she was unjustly condemned, perhaps that might do her more good than anything else that could be done for her."

"Is that true?" exclaimed Dr. Brooke in startled surprise. "I have always believed that there was something very wrong about that trial; but can it really be proved?"

"It can. Perfectly proved."

"Did you say a servant of hers? One of the Deanhams, I suppose? Good-for-nothing women, they both were! Why couldn't she speak out sooner?"

"It is a long story. One of them was much more guilty than the other. She was paid by my step-mother to keep silence."

"Thank God!" cried Dr. Brooke fervently.

A step was heard. Alice came softly in and said to Dr. Brooke, "She knows you are here, and is delighted."

"You did not tell her that her child was here too?"

"No, I dared not. She is in such a very critical state, and the other doctor frightened me so."

"Olive," said Dr. Brooke, "as soon as it is safe she shall be told you are in the house. Stay here, dear child; one of us will soon come back to you."

Olive heard them go upstairs, and pictured the scene as they took their places by the bedside. How she longed to be there too, and yet how she trembled at the thought of going! Time passed. All was quiet, and she sat wondering how long it would be before some one would come and tell her that there was a hope that her mother's life might be spared. Was this to be the end of her own struggle to gain a knowledge which she had hoped would make her poor mother's last years so happy? Was there to be no quiet time when they two might dwell together in love and peace? It could not be possible that this was to be all.

At last Dr. Brooke came down-stairs—he was alone. He walked slowly across the room to Olive. She never moved, but fixed her swimming eyes upon his to read the sense of the words which she was about to hear. He took her hand in his, and said, "I have given her something which has done her good—she looks so beautiful and happy."

"But will she get better?"

He shook his head. "When you see her, which will be very soon, I don't think you will feel so unhappy about losing her. She has no wish to live."

"Won't she wish to live when she knows she will have me with her?"

"Dear Olive, her mind is not always in a sound state. She has suffered so much that it is now almost permanently unsettled. When she is not herself, she has fears and fancies, and is anything but happy. You would be wretched if you saw her then."

"I would bear it. I could make my own happiness consist in watching over her."

"I know you could, but it would not be good for you, and I do not think that it is a thing to wish for. She has no fear of death. She knows that she could not have lived long, even if she had escaped her present illness, and now that the two things for which she has prayed for nearly twenty years have been granted her, she will feel still more at rest."

Olive's distress was so great that she could not speak.

She turned her sorrowful eyes inquiringly on her uncle, who said, "For years, whenever her mind was sane, she has prayed to be allowed to see you before she died—that was one wish; the other was, to know that when she was dead, you would be able to respect her memory. Both these prayers have been granted."

"But I had so hoped that we should live together," sobbed Olive.

"Do not wish for it; she is conscious of her mental affliction, and suffers great agony when she feels that another attack is coming on—she would have other attacks."

Olive sighed heavily, and in that sigh renounced the future for which she had worked and hoped so long. What was best for her mother should be best for her also. "Have you told her that Mary Gardiner has confessed?" said she.

"Yes, she took the news calmly. She seems to have felt certain that the truth would at last be made known. You see she knew her own innocence; the shock came to her when it was doubted—not when it is established."

"May I go to her?"

"Her sister is now talking to her about you—she means to offer to send for you. You must go into the room as if you had been brought from some little distance, and must on no account show much emotion."

"Oh, I can be quite calm," said Olive, grasping her uncle's hand as she spoke with a force which showed that she was struggling with the strongest excitement.

"Remember that her life hangs by a thread."

"How long will she live?" asked Olive, trying to be very brave.

"Perhaps four or five hours—perhaps ten or twelve."

Olive was perfectly silent, but Dr. Brooke could see the intensity of her suffering—when at last she spoke she said, "Do not be afraid to let me see her. I shall try to use well the short time which is left me."

Dr. Brooke kissed her, and at the same moment saw Alice in the doorway. She had come to take Olive to her mother. "Remember!" said he, and then she went. Her heart beat almost audibly, but she walked steadily up-

stairs, and in another minute the door was opened, and she could see into the room where the mother who had filled her entire mind ever since she had first heard of her existence, was now, lying at the point of death. A soft lamplight filled the room, but Olive saw nothing but the bed and a figure whose outlines were lost in the shadow of a large white curtain. Alice led Olive across the room, made her sit down by the bed and gently placed her hand in her mother's. Olive was about to speak, and to speak impulsively, for this took her by surprise, but Alice put a finger on her lips and said, "Answer what she says, don't speak."

"My darling, I have you at last," said her mother softly; "I always knew I should see you. When the doctor said I must die—not Richard Brooke—the other doctor, I mean, I was glad, for I knew for certain that, however soon death might come, you would come still sooner!"

Olive tenderly clasped the hand which held hers and said, "May I not see you, mother? The curtain hides you from me. Do not think because I have been away from you all this time, that I have not loved you. I have loved you ever since I first discovered that you were my mother."

A delighted smile passed over Alice's face as she stooped to kiss Olive for this speech, then she drew back the curtain, and lying on the pillow before her, Olive saw the well-remembered face. It was still beautiful and noble, but painfully thin and wan. She saw her mother's burning brown eyes fixed on hers, and watched a happy smile as it flitted over her lips. Then she lay still, looking at Olive with perfect, but quiet happiness. Now that she had her child by her side she wanted nothing more. At last she said, "Let me have a little more light, Alice; I want to see her more clearly. Stand up, my child, and let me see you better."

Alice lighted some candles and held them close to Olive. Most eagerly the poor mother strained her already dim eyes to scan every feature of that beloved face. "You are very pretty, darling," she murmured. "I wonder whether I was ever at all like you? I can hardly be-

lieve now that there ever was a time when I was young and happy."

"I am not very happy, mother—" began Olive, but her aunt checked her. Her mother had not heard her words. "My darling," said she, "I pray that your life may be happy. Never act in opposition to what your heart tells you is right. That is what I was made to do—that brought me to this," and she began to weep most piteously.

Olive stooped and kissed her, saying, "I will always remember your words, mother." Alice drew her gently back from her mother, who was embracing her convulsively, and would soon have been in a passion of grief and tears. "Don't speak for a while," said Alice, "your mother must rest. She is too weak to talk any more just yet."

"Weak! when I have my child with me! The sight of her has made me strong. I feel quite a different woman! Besides, there are some things which must be spoken. Olive, you said a few minutes since that you had loved me ever since you heard of my existence—then the person who told you of that did not tell you of the dreadful accusation which had been brought against me?"

"Yes, she did!" exclaimed Olive, with a vehemence which she regretted immediately, "but, mother, as soon as I recollected that if I had a mother she must be that lady whom I had once seen, I did not believe what she said. You know I saw you when you came to the window in Kensington Square—I saw your face then, I knew what this wicked woman said must be false."

Alice again laid a warning hand on Olive's shoulder.

"Be quiet, Alice," cried the poor mother. "You think that I shall excite myself; you forget how good it is for me to hear what she is saying! You trusted me, my darling, tell me so again."

"I did. I never once doubted you after I had recovered the shock sufficiently to be able to think."

A perfectly radiant smile illuminated her mother's face, and for some time she lay quite still, enraptured with Olive's words. At last she said, "What you tell me, dear, makes me so happy that it seems to repay me for all

that I have gone through; say it again. You are sure you did not doubt me?"

"I am quite sure."

"Your father did," said she in a voice of intense pain. "He doubted me, and he knew me better than you did; that was what hurt me so cruelly! I had never once deceived him; no, not in the smallest matter."

"Mother, he was not with you; he was deceived by those two wicked women!"

She was about to say something in answer to this, but Alice interrupted her and turned her thoughts in another direction by saying, "Dorothy, think of your child, how delightful it is to know that she trusted you."

She pressed Olive's hand. "My child," said she, "you are with me at last. I have suffered agonies from the fear that if ever I did meet you face to face you would turn away from me. You were torn away from me before you could even speak plainly! I could have borne everything if they had left me my child."

"Don't think of that," said Olive. "Mother, I should never have turned away from you! I remember so well when I saw you, how your face attracted me! I thought of you for months, and longed to see you again."

"I saw *her*, standing by your side! *She* might be with you, but not I! *She* was always there to tell you I was a wretch unworthy of your love," cried Dorothy Brooke wildly.

"Don't speak of her! Don't think of her! You have heard that her falsehood can be proved; that the evidence is in our hands!"

"It must never be used," said her mother. "No one must ever know what Mary Deanham has told you. They thought me shameless and wicked when alive and their opinion could hurt me; let them think of me as they will when I am dead and gone."

"But my father must know!" said Olive.

"No, Olive, no! Your father must never be told. He failed me when he ought to have trusted me. I was tried and condemned when I was just recovering from a

long illness. You don't know all that I had to bear. I was ill in body and mind after my dear brother's terrible death, but I was recovering, and was nearly myself again when this trial came, and the sentence was given against me. That drove me quite mad—that, and their taking you away from me! No, your father believed the worst then, and made me lose my reason. I do not wish him ever to hear my name again!

"But those who are most guilty—the women who lied to him—cannot be punished without his knowing."

"Leave them unpunished. Let your father end his days believing what he believes now. I do not wish him to suffer any pain which I can spare him. Let your father die in peace. Let his children live without despising and hating their mother—let their wretched mother go her way. Your uncle will be your father, I hope, and his house your home. You will marry some day, dear. Tell your husband my unhappy story. Show him Hannah Deanham's letters. Then, if he insists on having this secret made public, obey him, but if possible, let it be buried with me."

"Mother, you are very noble and forgiving!"

"Oh, no, I do not wish your father and those poor children of his to go through life branded with—"

"My dear friend, you are talking far too much," said Dr. Brooke who, unperceived by all, had entered the room and joined the group by the bedside.

"I will talk no more; but, Olive, you must give me that promise."

"I do promise," said Olive. "Mother, you may trust me."

"Richard," said the sick woman, "do not look so grave. No one was ever hurt by too much happiness! I am no worse than I was."

He was feeling her thin thread of pulse, and thinking that it would be very difficult for any one to be much worse. She was only kept alive at all by her joy in the sight of her child. "You must at any rate rest a little while," said he. "Listen to this one thing which I wish to say to you,

Dorothy, and then rest in silence. I want you to know that this dear child of yours is dear to me also. She has been to me as my own child ever since she was taken from your keeping. For your sake I should have done everything in my power to make her happy, but besides that, my wife and I love her for herself." Olive's hand, which he had drawn away from her mother's, softly stole to his as she heard these words. He continued, "Have no anxiety about her future, her home is with us. We thought it right to yield her up to the care of her step-mother on her father's demand. Henceforth we recognize no authority but yours—if you give her to us she is ours."

"Richard," said a faint voice from the bed, "you know how to make a poor mother close her eyes in peace. I do give her to you."

"Olive," said Dr. Brooke, "kiss your mother and come with me down-stairs. Don't be afraid, Dorothy, neither she nor I will leave you." He drew Olive gently away. "It must be," said he, and then he added apologetically, "only for half an hour or so, she shall come back to you then."

He made Olive rest on the sofa, he sat down near her, and never had she seen him so full of thought. After some time he crept quietly upstairs, his patient was asleep. He told Olive this, and added, "Your poor aunt has been sitting up every night for a fortnight!"

"May I go and sit with my mother and let my aunt have some sleep?"

"Better not," said Dr. Brooke gravely, and Olive felt that he said so because he knew that the weary watcher's labors would soon be ended. After a while he himself fell asleep. How gray and anxious his face looked, but how noble its beauty was! Olive watched him uneasily for some time. She feared that he was not strong enough to bear such a fatiguing day as this without injury. He might have slept for an hour or more when she heard a slight sound upstairs. Her heart sickened with fear. Had death, the dread visitor whom her uncle seemed to look for with such certainty, actually come? So far as she herself could

judge, there seemed to be no reason whatever why her mother should not live for weeks. Her voice was strong, her eyes bright, her mind clear, and yet Dr. Brooke had never wavered, but had said she must die in an hour or two. She could not bear the suspense any longer, but stole noiselessly upstairs, and opened her mother's door. Alice was sitting by the bed where Olive had sat before. She was reading aloud to her sister and her voice was firm and unfaltering. The sick woman was lying perfectly still with an expression of the most complete contentment on her face, her eyes were calmly fixed on the reader; she seemed to be entirely engrossed by what she was listening to. Olive went nearer to the bed. Her mother just smiled on her and murmured, "I have asked your aunt to read that beautiful service to me—I thought I should like to hear it. Sit down and listen too, darling, that is, unless you would prefer to read instead of listening."

Olive felt a large lump rise in her throat—it seemed almost to choke her. She was not able to speak, but shook her head emphatically; she could not have read those words to her own dying mother even though they conveyed in the words of an apostle the divine assurance of a love which could conquer death, and of a life which was beyond the grave.

"Then go on, Alice dear," said her sister gently, "sit a little on one side, and let me have my darling child close to me."

Alice gave her chair to Olive, took another, and then went on reading. The extreme beauty and solemnity of the words which she heard touched Olive with awe, but the horror of hearing her mother spoken of as one who was dead already, told on her with such force that she could neither look up nor move. All her strength had to be given to self-restraint. Each moment she felt as if she must scream aloud, or sob, while in reality she must not even suffer the hand which was now holding her mother's to tremble, or twitch, or show any sign of strong emotion, lest she should do her harm. But as Alice read, Olive became calmer, and gradually her heart became attuned

to a noble renunciation of her own selfish wishes and submission to God's will.

Her mother lay quite still. Once she grasped Olive's hand with a sudden convulsive force, but now for a long time the reading had been uninterrupted.

"She is asleep," said Olive at length, fearing that Alice was taxing her strength too much by reading so long.

"That's a good thing," replied Alice, "but I think I had better go on. Sometimes people miss the voice which has sent them to sleep, and waken up directly it stops." So she read a while longer and then closed her book and sat in silence. This made no difference to the sleeper, whose head lay peacefully on the pillow, and whose lips were parted in a happy half-smile. Gradually the faint daylight came stealing in and turned the mellow lamplight into a chill, cold gray. And still these two sat by the bedside, fearing to move or speak, or make any sound, Alice with her handsome face white and worn with fatigue, but with her eyes resting lovingly on Olive, and Olive with her head bent down. More light came, and soon the life of the street began. These two anxious women had for many hours forgotten that the world had any other inhabitants than those who were now assembled together in that one room.

"Had we not better put some more clothes on the bed?" whispered Olive. "I think we ought, her hand begins to feel very chilly."

A look of fear came into Alice's eyes—she softly drew back the curtain which hid her sister from her sight. She felt her hand and her forehead, and started back. That one sudden and eager pressure of the hand which Olive had felt so many hours before, was her mother's last farewell!

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Ros. Oh, how full of briers is this working-day world!
As You Like It.

WHAT would become of all the Exhibitions which contribute to make the month of May such a pleasure and such a toil, if artists still adhered to the pious old custom of steeping their brushes in holy water all through Lent? Lent is the very busiest season of the whole year; and all over London, men were toiling and half-killing themselves with excitement as the fatal day for "sending in" drew nearer. Morrison was as busy and as anxious as the rest. The winter had been dark and foggy, and his mind had been too unsettled for work. He was trying to finish his big picture and another from Rastwick Nab, and for once was grateful, when Ambergreen, who always had plenty of time at his disposal, came idly in with ample leisure to criticise. He laughed at Morrison's nervousness and said, "I never get into such a state about my pictures as you seem to do—not a bit of it. When I have finished a thing it is finished, and I put it on one side and trouble myself no more about it."

"But my things never do seem quite right, and I can't help working at them so long as I see I can make them better."

"Nonsense! You are no judge of your own work. Besides, after all, look how you are getting on! No young fellow of my acquaintance is half so well thought of. Why, whose work is this?" And as Ambergreen spoke he took up a little drawing of the harbor at St. Hilda's, by Rosamond Keithley—the very picture she was painting when Morrison first saw her.

"Oh, that's a lady's work. What do you think of it? Tell me, and then I will tell you something."

"That you are engaged to her, I suppose?" said Ambergreen coolly, not for one moment imagining that there

could be a word of truth in his assertion, for he looked on getting married as throwing away every prospect of advancement, worldly and intellectual, and could not believe that his friend would be so foolish. "She can draw," said Ambergreen.

"Yes, and I am engaged to her. If you wait a little longer you will see her. She is coming here to try to finish that for the Ellesmere. I have persuaded her to send in."

"There is some very good work in it. But I would not marry her if I were you. I should always imagine her intentions were not honorable. I mean she is probably much more fond of drawing than of anything else, and is only marrying you because you can help her to get on. That's it, you may be sure. You smile as if you felt quite safe, but you may depend on it that is her reason. I wish you would not marry her—I hate my friends marrying; and now there's you, and Miss Brooke, and Mr. Ardrossan—three of you—at one go!"

"Miss Brooke? Who is Miss Brooke going to marry?"

"Mr. Ardrossan, of course; so there's no more picture-buying to be looked for from him. I should not have minded marrying Miss Brooke myself; that is, if ever I could bring myself to marry anybody. I used to think she did rather like me; but then, you see, that aunt looked such a dragon that I never dared to flirt at all."

"Is she really going to marry Mr. Ardrossan?" inquired Morrison.

"Yes, really—at least I am told so. I wish she was not, don't you? Good-by. Be happy about your pictures. They are sure to be great successes. I never saw such a lucky young fellow as you are. Everything goes right with you. You will pass through life without knowing what disappointment is! At least, it looks like it. Good-by again."

Morrison turned aside to hide his face, which, as he well knew, wore an expression somewhat at variance with this statement. The pang he felt on hearing Ambergreen's news was not long-lived. He was not quite cured of his

love for Olive—he wondered sometimes whether he ever should be—but he had a very sincere affection for Rose Keithley, and in half an hour she and her aunt, Mrs. Ullathorne, would be with him. Dr. Ullathorne, at the East End, had a very comfortable house, but there was scarcely a room in it which he could call his own. All day long it was besieged by people who “just wanted to speak to him for five minutes.” It was astounding how many there were in his parish who were in need of money and advice, and time to state their wishes, and each person’s necessity was still more pressing than that of the one who had gone before him. One room, easy of access from the door, was set apart for these visitors, but it frequently overflowed all over the house, and no room could be pronounced absolutely safe from intrusion, not even a poor, shabby little old nursery where Rosamond Keithley, now on a visit to the good rector of St. Dionysius’, had of late set up her easel, in the vain hope of quiet. Morrison had seen her futile attempts to secure a corner to work in, and had invited her to come and paint in his studio; and while Ambergreen was talking to him she was on her way there. To-day her companion was not Mrs. Ullathorne, but Miss Lettice Brooke, who had come from Austerfield to pay a visit in Sussex, and was spending a week in Kensington Square to break the journey. Poor lady, old as she was, she found her sister Mary still treated her as a baby, and was not sorry when the Bethnal Green Ullathornes made her go there for a couple of days. This morning she was in a flutter of excitement at being asked to go with Rose Keithley to Mr. Morrison’s studio. “You are sure it is right?” she asked. “I want to go, of course, but I don’t want to do anything very wrong.”

“How can it be very wrong? It is not wrong at all.”

“Well, my dear, you know him, and I will do as you like, but they do tell such stories of artists and their goings on. They are most of them very wicked, I fancy; but I’ll go if you wish it. You say you want Mr. Morrison’s advice about your picture. It does seem so funny to think of his growing up to be an authority on any subject! I re-

member him quite a little boy, with no sense whatever, except what my niece Olive put into his head."

"That must have been a very long time ago," cried Rosamond, full of dutiful respect for her lover's intellect.

"Well, it was. I don't know that he was stupider than other boys—they are all stupid—but still I do think he was a particularly dull boy. Not that I ever said much to him."

"Then how do you know he was so dull?" said Rose, much piqued. But Miss Lettice was quite unaware she was saying anything wrong.

"I'm sure I don't know how I do know, my memory is so bad, but I am certain he was dull."

Rose laughed merrily, and said, "At any rate he is not dull now. He is so clever and interesting! He will like to see you. He has talked to me about Austerfield."

"I can't think what he finds to admire in the place, or what Olive does either—I expect they liked it because they had all their own way."

"He has never mentioned your niece Olive to me," said Rose. "Was he much at your house?"

"At *our* house!" gasped Miss Lettice, who, being country-bred, was a great stickler for the due observance of divinely-appointed divisions of classes. "No, he never entered *our* doors; but he was a good-looking, well-behaved little fellow, and somehow or other Olive and he were always together."

"How old were they then?" asked Rosamond, with one faint tremor of uneasiness.

"Oh, babies; children, at any rate. It is years ago now. I don't suppose he even remembers her name. She thinks he does, but I dare say he has forgotten he ever even saw her."

"Here we are!" said Rosamond.

Miss Lettice puckered up her lips in surprise. She had not expected to find Mr. Morrison in such good quarters.

"I bring with me an old acquaintance of yours," said Rose, who had not the slightest conception of the heights from which Miss Lettice had looked down on "Willie,"

together with all the other "village people." "Can't you guess who it is?"

Morrison looked at the handsome old lady, who, dressed in her pretty maidenly grays, now stood smiling so benevolently on him. "Of course I can," he cried warmly. "Do you think I could ever forget an Austerfield face? It is Miss Lettice Brooke."

"You really remember me! You have not seen me for nearly a dozen years!" cried Miss Lettice; and then, tactless as usual, she exclaimed, "My dear Rosamond, if I were you I should be jealous of these very vivid recollections of Mr. Morrison's. My niece Olive is just the same. Whenever she sees me she quite tears me down with questions about a hundred different things at Austerfield that I have no interest in."

Morrison looked up eagerly. Miss Lettice continued: "Now, in reality it is as poor a place as you could wish to see. There's not a decent house in the whole village, except our own and the clergyman's—all the rest are mere shabby little cottages."

Rose Keithley, who knew that Morrison had lived there, and that his origin had been rather humble, blushed deeply at this, and looked pleadingly at Miss Lettice, who ran on with great composure and velocity for some minutes longer in the same strain.

"We must not talk," interposed Rosamond, taking off her bonnet and retreating to a distant table. "I am only allowed to come here on condition that I don't speak."

"That's what I call a particularly plain hint," thought she: "almost too plain." But Miss Lettice only said, "Quite right. Of course work must be paramount here, and I am not much of a talker."

"Will you have a book, Miss Lettice?" said Rose, full of pity for Morrison. "Do let me get you a book."

"Yes, you may give me a book, but I am not much of a reader. You see I forget what I have read ten minutes after I have shut the book, so what's the use of my reading? No, I'll sit here and think. I won't speak, Mr. Morrison. Don't be afraid; I quite know the impor-

tance of silence." There was a second's pause, and then she added, "You see I sometimes stay with my sister-in-law in Harley Street, and when I am there she occasionally as a great favor lets me sit with her in her study when she is writing, and that makes me know so well how important it is to be absolutely quiet and silent when in the company of any one who is doing head-work. She is dreadfully particular—she won't be disturbed. When you are with her you must not move or speak, or read a newspaper, or do almost anything. You see it won't do to be noisy, for she is thinking hard all the time. I am sure it is very good of her to sit working away so patiently for so many hours, all for the sake of writing books that one forgets ten minutes after one has read them. Now, isn't it, Mr. Morrison, very hard?"

He made a civil speech, and she responded by another; after which, silent for five minutes, she said, "I think you have been at Austerfield lately, Mr. Morrison?"

"Yes, I went over from St. Hilda's—I had a fancy to see the old place again."

"I heard you had been there. It was so odd, too; I went to see my brother in Harley Street the other day—just to spend the day, you know, for my real visit there is to be paid when I return from Sussex—that will be in about three weeks time, for I go there to-morrow, and am to stay three weeks. Well, I went to my brother Richard's house, and I found my niece Miss Olive very ill—altogether ill, and out of spirits. I don't know what had happened to her, or whether anything had happened, but she looked pale and thin and unhappy, and was sitting in her own room painting a few twigs of some bush or other—ugly things they were, I assure you, Mr. Morrison—and I said to her, 'Olive, why don't you get some pretty flowers or fruit or something from Covent Garden to copy? What's the use of wasting your time over such common rubbish as that, when Covent Garden is so near?' And she said, 'Don't be so disrespectful to flowers from your own native place;' and I cried out, 'My own native place! How did they come here?' And she asked me if I had

heard of your being there, and said she was sure you had been, for some one had sent her a whole hamper full of wild-flowers, and she felt certain that it could have been no one but you; so I said you had been there; for, you see, just by accident I had heard of your sleeping one night at 'The Four Alls,' and that made me able to tell her; and you can't think how delighted she looked when she found she had guessed right."

Morrison bent his head down over his picture. He did not answer this long speech. He dared not speak—he scarcely dared to think. Rose glanced at him, wondering whether Miss Lettice's talk was irritating him beyond endurance, or whether his emotion was caused by something else. What could it mean?

Miss Lettice did not notice anything—not even that no one had replied to her speech. Rose saw her beginning to speak again, and trembled. It was terrible that Morrison should be so disturbed when each moment was so precious! She would go—she wished she had not come—it was too cruel that he should be thus tormented with Miss Lettice on the very eve of "sending in."

"You have not seen my niece, I think, since you were both children?" persisted the unconscious Miss Lettice.

"Oh, yes, I have; I saw her in Scotland in October, and I met her at a party in Harley Street on the 6th of February."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Miss Lettice, "what a memory you have for dates! I wish I had, I am sure. Can you remember the dates of your parties as well as that, Rose?"

Rose Keithley started and did some injury to her drawing, for the 6th of February was the evening which Morrison had promised to spend in her company, and he had broken that engagement, apparently, for the sake of seeing Miss Olive Brooke. "What have I done?" she cried, noticing that she had dropped a brush full of color on a delicate part of her sky.

"Take care, Rose," said Morrison, who was quick to hear her low cry of distress and go to the rescue. "Be cautious how you work, dear; you have no time now for

anything but very careful finishing touches." His voice was so kind and his offered assistance so prompt that his Rose took heart again and looked lovingly in his face.

Finding every one so unsociable, Miss Lettice began to read, and was actually silent for nearly an hour. Morrison painted, but his mind was in a turmoil. Miss Lettice's stray words stirred up so many thoughts of all kinds. Ambergreen said Olive was engaged to Mr. Ardrossan! Miss Lettice said she was eager for news of Austerfield and delighted with his flowers. Did she care for him a little? She could scarcely think of Austerfield without thinking of him at the same time. She certainly thought of Austerfield. But what did it signify what her thoughts were, when she was engaged to Mr. Ardrossan and he to Rosamond Keithley? But was she engaged to Mr. Ardrossan? He turned to Miss Lettice and said, "I hear that Miss Olive Brooke is engaged to Mr. Ardrossan—I hope I do not take a liberty in speaking of it, and congratulating you."

"Engaged to Mr. Ardrossan—indeed she is not!" cried Miss Lettice, who considered Olive nearly twenty years too young to think of marrying. "I am certain she is not. I should have been informed of it if she were."

Morrison drew a long breath of relief, and then his eye fell on Rosamond Keithley's dutiful head, which was bent down over her work. He saw by a tinge of deeper red in her cheek than was usual that she was either anxious about what she was doing or something else, and hastily went to her side and whispered, "Is there anything I can do for you, dear? Don't forget that I take quite as much interest in your work now as in my own." On this she looked so happy that he could not but be happy too.

CHAPTER XL.

We lose a life in every friend we lose,
And every death is painful but the last.—LONDON.

IT was a dull and dismal afternoon. The air was laden with moisture, which fell in almost imperceptibly fine rain. The streets were muddy and wretched-looking.

Olive was in her room dressing to go to her mother's funeral. Much as she dreaded the pain of witnessing such a ceremony, it would have hurt her still more to stay away. Her heart swelled when she thought how small would be the number of those who would care to be present. Her mother had expressed a wish that she should wear no mourning, but on this one day she felt she must put on a black dress. Dr. Brooke was to be there, and Alice, and, as Olive believed, no one else, but when she went downstairs her aunt came forward and said, "Dear child, I am going with you." This mark of kindness touched Olive deeply—there was sacrifice as well as love in it.

Arrived at the cemetery, the scanty band of mourners arranged themselves and followed the coffin to the grave. Olive felt in a waking dream. She kept repeating to herself her mother's words as transmitted by Alice: "Tell my dear Olive not to grieve over my death. Make her understand how I long for rest. Tell her that I shall perhaps be more with her now than I have ever been before, and she must not pain me by the sight of any sorrow." Olive felt as if she were under an obligation to shed no tears and think no repining thoughts. She had brought with her all her Austerfield primroses—they were fresh and bright as ever. She liked the idea of placing these, which to her mind were the most precious flowers she could procure, in her mother's grave. When the service was over she laid them on the coffin, and then she caught hold of her uncle's arm and said, "Now, take me away." But just as he was leading her away, she turned and saw Alice Ainsley standing gazing into the grave with a look in her face which plainly revealed that she was feeling that she had nothing left to live for. Ever since her girlhood Alice had lived for one object only. She had entirely devoted herself to the care of the sister who during all this time had been so dependent on her, but who now needed no more help from any one. Whither was she now to turn? Who needed her love or care? Where was she to look for companionship? Olive saw the sense of desolation which was overmastering her, and stole gently to her side, slipped her hand in hers,

and said, "Aunt Alice, love me a little, and let me be with you sometimes. May I go home with you to-day?"

A pleased smile broke over Alice's face; she kept Olive's hand in hers, and they all left the cemetery. No more was said until the carriage stopped at her door.

"Olive says she will stay with me till the evening," said she. "It is very kind of her. I have a great many things to arrange, and she will help me. I hardly know what to do with myself—I think I shall go abroad."

Dr. Brooke seemed uneasy, and said, "Whatever you decide on, Alice, I hope you understand that you have friends in Harley Street who will be glad to be of service to you."

"Yes, do understand that, dear," cried Mrs. Brooke, with a warmth which surprised her husband. "I will come to see you in the morning—if I may?"

"In the morning!" His wife, who was so tenacious of her time during the morning, was offering to pay this early visit! Dr. Brooke looked at Selina in amazement. She was now saying to Alice, "Do not make any very decided arrangements about the future until I have seen you—please do not, for I have something to propose to you."

He was still more surprised in the evening, for Selina was dressed for dinner and in the drawing-room even before the gong sounded. Such a thing had not happened for years. A smile passed over his face when he saw her, but it was not so much in commendation of her punctuality as because something in her manner pleased him so much. He could not help thinking of the time when he first knew her—when she was a girl in her own home—and all through dinner he was struck by her gentle thoughtfulness.

After tea he usually depended on an easy-chair and an amusing book for the comfort of his evening, for though Mrs. Brooke's day's work was nominally ended at seven, she invariably stole away to dwell in fond criticism on the inky pages produced in the morning. This evening he established himself in a corner as usual; but happening after a while to look up, he was surprised to find he was

not alone—his wife was sitting staring into the fire with folded hands and very earnest eyes. "I thought you had gone off to your work," said he.

"I am never going to write again," she replied sadly.

"Oh, poor wife, you have had a bad review? Don't let that vex you too much." She shook her head. "It's a great deal worse than that. In fact, the reviews one gives one's self always are worse than those one gets from other people. Richard, I have been a very bad wife to you."

"My dear Selina, no. I can't let you say that."

"Yes, I have, and you have been so good and kind and patient! I am ashamed to think of it."

"Think of what? What can you mean?"

"Of your forbearance—of how I must have tried you."

"What can make you talk in this way, Selina? I am not making any complaint. It is the very last thing I had it in my mind to do to-night."

"But I am making a complaint against myself. I seem all at once to see how much you have had to bear, Richard. I have tried you to the uttermost, I know, and under the circumstances I can't imagine how you have borne it so well."

"My dear Selina, you are distressing yourself without a cause. What can you be thinking of? 'Under the circumstances'—under what circumstances?" And the doctor looked as he felt—honestly puzzled.

"I'll tell you what I mean. Perhaps the only good you have ever got from my writing novels has come to you to-day. My novel-writing has made me understand something which I should never have understood without it. Richard, I was not your first love; I thought I was until this morning. Your first love was Alice Ainsley. Don't interrupt me. Let me tell you the story as I imagine it—you shall tell me if I am right. Richard, my dear husband, if I did not love you with all my heart—if I did not know you loved me, and feel grateful to you for doing so, and trust in you entirely, I could not speak to you as I am doing now."

They were now sitting side by side. He took her hand in his and waited to hear what she wished to say. "Richard, dear, I saw it all this morning. Chesterfield married Dorothy Ainsley—you were engaged to Alice. If Dorothy was as beautiful and noble-looking a woman as Alice is, it must have been hard to find two such sisters anywhere. Chesterfield's trouble brought on your trouble—that's how I imagine it all—and when he divorced his poor wife, your engagement with Alice was broken off too. I see it all. She would not marry into a family which had treated her sister so ill—or she wished to devote herself to her, or you did not uphold Dorothy's innocence heartily enough—there are so many ways in which it might have happened. It is painful to think of it, but have I not guessed the truth?"

"Yes," said he, "you have. Alice and I were to have been married. No time was fixed, for I had my way to make, but we were engaged, and then that miserable trial came, and everything was at an end between us."

"I can't think how you could ever care for me after having been engaged to Alice. You did love me, I think, but she is so superior—she is one in a thousand."

"So are you. I loved her most truly; but, Selina, I loved you too, and, dear, need I say that I love you still?"

Mrs. Brooke had never been so happy in her life. "In spite of all I have done to make you unhap—no, uncomfortable?"

"What is that? Of course I love you. I may sometimes have wished you would give more of your time to your house and children, but I have never ceased to feel that you were a high-minded, noble woman. There is no smallness of mind in you, Selina."

"I hope not," replied Mrs. Brooke humbly. She was afraid she did not quite deserve this high praise.

"I am sure of it. To-day in the cemetery you somehow or other guessed that there had been a time when poor Alice Ainsley was more to me than any one else in the world, and you at once became doubly kind to her."

"How could I be otherwise? I felt she was a thousand

times more worthy of you than I. I looked at you both, and thought how you must have suffered. I was ashamed when I saw how little I had done to make you happy with me. Richard, I will never write another page. We will have the children at home—it is time they left school. Let us have them with us and be happy together.”

“We will have them back,” said Dr. Brooke; “but as to your giving up your writing, I exact no such sacrifice. Do it at stated times; don’t give it up altogether.”

“We will think about that—you know I am not one of those who think that the half is better than the whole. Besides, I want to please you.”

“To please me, dear? Don’t class me with those who maintain that a woman ought to have no higher ambition than to make her husband comfortable.”

“Oh, no!” cried Mrs. Brooke. “There is the bell. It is Olive. Let us finish this conversation before she comes.”

The bell did not announce Olive’s arrival, but that of a letter for Dr. Brooke. He read it with a curious smile on his face, then without speaking thrust it in his pocket—he had not the heart to tell his wife its contents that night, but perhaps it is not quite fair to withhold them from our readers. It was a note from Mrs. Ullathorne, and began thus:—

RICHARD BROOKE,—I have to-day read your wife’s novel. You may tell her so, and that I recognize my own portrait, and am extremely grateful to her for the pains which she has bestowed on it. You may also inform her that before I went abroad last year, I made my will, and as you and she have never worried me with your attentions, I left 20,000*l.* to you, the same sum to her, and 10,000*l.* to each of your children; but as I find you have a wife so richly endowed with genius that she will have no difficulty in providing for your family without any assistance from me, I have burnt that will, and shall make a new one to-morrow morning, in which this very unnecessary bequest will not appear.

MARY ULLATHORNE.

“Does that letter vex you in any way, dear?” inquired Mrs. Brooke, when she saw that her husband had suddenly become rather silent.

“Yes—no. It would have vexed me terribly if we had not had this talk together. I defy anything to vex me now.”

CHAPTER XLI.

Thus do all traitors;
If their purgation did consist in words,
They are as innocent as grace itself:
Let it suffice thee, that I trust thee not.

As You Like It.

HOW was the so-called Lady Brooke to be treated? This was the question which the Brookes of Harley Street lost no time in putting to themselves after the real Lady Brooke's death, and the disclosures which had preceded it. Dr. Brooke had a burning desire to introduce her to the notice of the nearest policeman; but being reminded that that was incompatible with letting her go her way in peace, he declared that he would never see or speak to her again. But, after all, his part was an easy one to play, for she had no wish whatever to see him or to speak to him, and never did either when it was possible to avoid it. Mrs. Brooke felt an equal repugnance to her; and as for Olive, she loathed the very thought of her. At the same time all three considered themselves bound to let her depart quietly—that is, without any open scandal.

Two days after Olive's flight from Welbeck Street, Lady Brooke called in Harley Street, and was told that the whole family was out. This she did not believe, and was furious at being denied admittance. On this particular day she had not meant to stay long with Olive; she had others to see as well as her undutiful step-daughter, and more crops of dragon's teeth to sow than one. Being turned away from Dr. Brooke's door, she stopped a cab and began her rounds by paying a visit to Mrs. Ullathorne.

"Mary," said she, "you have been kinder to me than any of Chesterfield's sisters—I shall always be grateful to you. I wish you would come out to India. The climate would suit you admirably, if you only stayed six months or so."

Mrs. Ullathorne shook her head. "I do not expect to

be long here. I have much to do and to think of—my house must be set in order."

"Oh, I am so sorry if anything is wrong," cried Lady Brooke, who was not conversant with phraseology of this kind. "It is Olive's fault if there is; she said she would look after everything."

Mrs. Ullathorne growled, but did not condescend to explain. Lady Brooke continued: "Mary, what do you think of Selina encouraging Olive to set me at defiance?"

"She is a novel-writing nuisance!"

"She does not seem to care for the feelings of any of her relations. Have you seen her last novel? They say it is rather better than usual."

"In fact, I read no novels. I leave that to poor empty-headed Sister Lettice—she is never without a novel in her hands. But why do you go on asking me if I have read it? Is there anything in it I ought to see? Has she been putting us all in it?"

"They say so. I have not read it myself, but I have got it here, and soon shall," said Lady Brooke, tapping the first volume of "Cross and Fifty," of which she had devoured every word. "I expect to find a portrait of myself in it when I do."

"It's of no consequence what she does; she is welcome to put me into every book she writes, if she chooses. I am sure I shall never trouble myself to read any of them."

"Oh, she wouldn't put you in—she wouldn't take such a liberty."

"I feel quite indifferent," replied Mrs. Ullathorne, whose curiosity was now piqued to the uttermost. "People must describe somebody. I dare say my character will do as well for her as another."

Lady Brooke chatted a while longer and then left, but she purposely forgot to take with her the first volume of "Cross and Fifty," and she had not been gone five minutes before Mrs. Ullathorne discovered it and began to read it with all the spectacle-power at her command. Lady Brooke then went to Mrs. Raymond's. "I have come to have a little talk with you, Esther," said she.

"Olive has left my lodgings and gone to Harley Street, I don't know why. Don't you think that Richard and Selina are behaving very ill?"

"They are odd people," replied Mrs. Raymond, shrugging her shoulders.

"I must see Olive before I leave England about the Filoselle business, you know; but if they won't let me do so, will you undertake to talk to her about it? The woman has been asking rather disagreeable questions—she is not so civil as she ought to be."

"She is a fool! She must have heard about Mr. Ardrossan."

"Yes, of course, but she is very pertinacious. Some one has told her that Olive was going back to India with me; so I suppose she thought it was off."

"If it were not for the Ardrossan affair Olive could not do better than go there—she would be snapped up directly."

"She would not go. She hates me; and then Chesterfield is so strange about her. He sits and thinks of that dreadful divorce business until he is quite low-spirited. That's why I have given myself so much trouble about Olive—I can't bear to see him look so dismal. He would be happier if she were married. She is a sullen, disagreeable girl—at least, she is so now. I should have thought she might have been very happy with me. I could have got on with her, I am sure, if she would have allowed me. I could live with any one who was at all nice to me."

This was perfectly true. Lady Brooke could have spent years in Olive's company untroubled by any thought of the injury which she had done her. Lady Brooke never suffered from remorse—had no compunctious visitings of any kind, unless, as was rarely the case, she saw that she had missed some good which had once been in her grasp.

"Is Olive sullen? Well, I'll talk to her."

"Do. Make her understand her position thoroughly. It really is necessary."

"Indeed it is," said Mrs. Raymond gravely. "It would not do to have it known and talked about."

Lady Brooke waited until the last day of her stay in England before she again tried to see Olive. When she arrived in Harley Street, Mrs. Brooke, who had been on guard for days to keep her away from Olive, had just gone out on business. Dr. Brooke too was out. John had been told not to allow Lady Brooke to enter the house, but Lady Brooke would take no denial.

"Miss Brooke is in her own room lying down, you say, and can see no one? She can't object to see her own mother. I must see her. I am surprised that any one should think of trying to prevent me!" And without listening to another word, and nimble as a girl of seventeen, she ran upstairs and made her way into Olive's room.

Olive was not lying down or ill, but sitting by the window, trying to copy the color of Willie's sycamore-buds. They were in a Salvati glass before her, and both her work itself and the thoughts to which it gave rise were very pleasant to her.

"Olive," said Lady Brooke, as she burst thus suddenly in on her, "I have come to see you, because to-morrow I leave England."

Olive rose and grasped the edge of the table to support herself. Then she stood looking at her step-mother with as much calmness as she could muster, but with an expression of intense dismay and dislike.

"Olive," said Lady Brooke gently, "you seem to have some very strong feeling against me. I have none against you. I do not like to go to another quarter of the world with the impression that something is amiss between us. I know girls often dislike their step-mothers, but still I have not been such an unkind one to you that you need wish not to see me before I go. Now, have I?"

Olive was silent; she was struggling with emotions of the most painful kind, which in obedience to her mother's wish she was desirous to conceal.

"You left my lodgings suddenly more than a week ago—you have twice left my house in the same way without telling me—once you say it was to avoid seeing a gentleman. You can't plead that excuse this time, for you went



away with one. It was very odd of you to do that; but be odd if you like—only don't be so remarkably unfriendly. Why have you shut yourself up here and done your best not to see me?"

"I—I thought it was better not—" Olive began.

"Why better not? I have given up the idea of gaining your affection, but I have done nothing to make it impossible for you to stay under the same roof with me for the two or three days which had to pass before I left. Think how strange it must seem to every one! Olive, your father's wife has at any rate a right to be treated with the appearance of respect."

"Don't speak of this to me," said Olive, putting the greatest constraint on herself. "Do not make me say—"

"But I want you to say all that you have to say—I want to know how I am to answer your father when he asks for an explanation of your treatment of me."

"Tell him what you like—only leave me alone."

"Leave you alone! You talk in a way which I don't understand."

"Leave me," said Olive faintly; "leave me, I beg of you—I must not try to make you understand."

On this Lady Brooke's pale face flushed rose-red, and she exclaimed, "Do you order me to leave the room, Olive?" Then she changed her manner and said, almost tearfully, "I give you my solemn word of honor that I have tried to be a good mother to you."

The words which she heard, the restraint which she was compelled to put on herself, the terrible excitement of the scene, were almost more than Olive could endure; she sank into her chair and hid her face in her hands. She was almost beside herself with pain. Lady Brooke's eyes were fixed on her; she saw how she was suffering, and said kindly, "Dear child, I have only come to say good-by—I am going back to your father. What am I to say to him?"

"What you think right," replied Olive very bitterly.

"That's not what I meant. Of course I will try to say what is right," said Lady Brooke simply, as if she were

quite too good and high-minded to do otherwise. "I mean to make light of the little differences which have arisen between us. Indeed, I dare say before I reach India I shall have forgotten them; but that's not what I wanted to say—I meant that I should like to be able to tell him that you were about to make a happy marriage."

Olive looked up with flashing eyes, and the expression of her face was so proudly indignant that Lady Brooke cried, "You surely don't object to my taking an interest in you?"

"I do. I will not have it! Leave me and my future, and all that concerns me, entirely alone!"

"Olive, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You know that I came back to England entirely on your account. I did not want you to feel yourself an outcast."

"I do not know it or believe it. I did not feel an outcast before you came. Besides, in my family the outcasts have been the noblest people."

"Taunts, sneers, endless reproaches—that's what I have from you, Olive. Well, I will go away, knowing that I have done my very best to be a good mother to you."

"'Mother'! Don't use the word! No one can be so good to a child as her own mother—you should have left me mine!"

"I should have left you yours! I had nothing to do with your losing her. Olive, at last you drive me to speak openly—it will save pain in the end. You are making yourself miserable by believing that letter which Hannah Deanham wrote to you. I know you are. She wrote to you, and she wrote to me too. She is a person who will tell lies on any side, if she is but well paid."

"I paid her nothing," said Olive very bitterly.

"I dare say not; you perhaps had not the opportunity of seeing her, but you believe the low gossip she put in her letter. You are influenced against me by a servant—and yet you know what she hinted at is untrue. The law proved it to be so. Your poor mother—I do not wish to pain you by speaking ill of her—was very giddy, and unprincipled."

Olive was goaded to the last pitch of endurance. For a moment she looked almost piteously in Lady Brooke's face. The words "Leave me, I entreat you, or you will drive me to say what I ought not," were on her lips; but Lady Brooke's face was hard as iron, and she added, "Her conduct nearly killed your father."

Olive sprang to her feet, opened a drawer in a cabinet, took out a small packet, and cried, "Don't repeat that lie again! You have said it very often to me. Whatever was done to hurt my father was done by you—you have neither heart nor conscience. This parcel is yours—take it and go, and never come near me again!" And as Olive spoke she pushed towards Lady Brooke a small packet—not for worlds would she have encountered the risk of touching her hand by giving it otherwise. Outside the parcel was written, "Part of fifty pounds of Lady Brooke's money left by Hannah Deanham for the use of her sister Mary, now residing at 33 Mulberry Street, Bethnal Green, which Mary Gardiner desires to return, now that she knows that it was earned by a crime."

Olive had not intended to give this to Lady Brooke herself—she had meant to send it to her; hence this long explanation outside. Lady Brooke started when she read it and turned very pale. Then she looked almost piteously at Olive and said, "You have seen Mary Gardiner?"

"I have seen her, and heard her story, and have in my possession proof that it is true."

"It is not true, and no such proof can exist. Hannah Deanham's word is as much to be relied on as her sister's."

"I have four letters of Hannah Deanham's, in each of which she owns that she committed perjury by your instigation."

"Tell me what you intend to do?" Lady Brooke's voice faltered as she spoke, and she seemed to acknowledge that her future was in Olive's power. Olive shook her head—words failed her.

"Olive," pleaded Lady Brooke, "your father and I have lived very happily together for nearly twenty years. It

seems a terrible thing to ruin the rest of his life—he is an old man now.”

“Do not talk to me of your happiness,” cried Olive wildly. “How dare you? If you have lived happily with him you must be a wretch to be able to do it. Did you never think of the wife whom he loved so much before you married him, and of the state to which you had brought her?”

“Of course I did. But most of her unhappiness was caused by her brother; you must know that. She never even pretended to love her husband.”

“She tried to love him; she would have loved him in the end. You were her greatest friend, and you robbed her of her husband and home and child. You took from her her good name and left her nothing—not even her reason! For twenty years she lived, sometimes quite mad with misery, always half-beside herself. I have been told that her one cry day and night used to be, ‘Let me have my child back.’”

“You can see her now,” pleaded Lady Brooke; “she has got you back now.”

“She is dead!”

“Dead?” echoed Lady Brooke.

“Yes, dead; she died a few hours after she saw me. She had lived in poverty and disgrace—not allowed to see her own child. She knew that if ever I heard her name at all it would be as that of a woman too wicked to be loved.”

“If she is dead,” cried Lady Brooke eagerly, “I did not know it, of course, or I would not have spoken as I did—but if she is dead you have no reason to do such a cruel thing as making Mary Gardiner’s story public would be. Why should you disturb our happiness, Olive? No one would be the better for it if you do.”

Olive’s lip curled. There was no making this woman think of any one but herself. “I don’t envy your happiness,” she said most bitterly, “but I am not going to disturb it. My mother’s last words were that she did not wish the truth to be known. She said that my father had

chosen to doubt her when, if he had trusted her, his doing so would have made all the difference, and that it was nothing to her now if he changed his opinion. She did not want him to be miserable, or your children to be branded with disgrace. I shall obey her wishes—you have nothing to fear from me."

"It was very noble of her, and very sensible too. Olive, one thing I must beg of you."

"Ask nothing of me—say no more; go back to my father and be happy if you can. I have told you what my mother said. I have nothing more to say to you. I only wish you would go out of my sight."

Lady Brooke was thoroughly uncomfortable. The strongest feeling of her nature was a desire to be at ease in mind and body.

She looked to see if there was any sign of Olive's softening. She could see none. "I leave England to-morrow. We shall probably never meet again," said she.

"Meet again!" cried Olive. "I will never see you again—how dare you speak of such a thing, after what you have done?" And as she spoke her gaze was unflinching. Lady Brooke could not meet it—she hesitated and almost trembled. How was she to leave the room?

"You have behaved very well—" she began.

"Hush!" cried Olive. "I will listen to no more, certainly not to thanks. I have obeyed my mother, that is all. Leave me at once, if you please; I can bear no more of this."

Lady Brooke turned, and, with her head bent down in as much of shame as she was capable of feeling, crept out of the room and house.

CHAPTER XLII.

Widow. And now you know my meaning.

Kath. A very mean meaning.

Taming of the Shrew.

Ros. Patience once more, whiles our compact is urged.

As You Like It.

MRS. RAYMOND had at least a dozen engagements for a certain April afternoon, and there was not one of them which did not seem to promise a very fair amount of enjoyment; but she left them all unfulfilled, and went to Harley Street to speak to her niece Olive on a matter of importance. "I don't like having to do this," thought she. "I don't like it at all, but I have no choice. Olive can't be such a fool as to want any advice from me about Mr. Ardrossan, but I must keep my promise." She asked if Mrs. Brooke was at home. For years when she had put that question John had muttered sulkily, "She is in the study, ma'am. She told me to say she was engaged." To this she had as invariably responded, "Oh, very well; say I've called." For Mrs. Raymond, once a great beauty, and still, as she hoped, a very fascinating woman, didn't see why she need show any anxiety to see her inky-fingered and absorbed sister-in-law, unless her sister-in-law had an equal desire to see her.

To-day John looked alert and said, "Mrs. Brooke is at home; she's in the drawing-room."

"Alone?"

"Yes, alone, ma'am."

"Writing?"

"Oh, dear, no, ma'am."

Mrs. Raymond could not believe her senses. "Selina," said she, "I want to talk to you; but first tell me if you have brought Mary Ullathorne round?"

"No."

"Have you tried?"

"Yes; Richard went, and said he was very sorry I had made one of my characters seem to be rather like her by seizing on two or three of her little peculiarities—"

"You don't mean that you allowed him to own that any part of that character was drawn from her?"

"I could not help doing that—you see it was."

"You should have sworn that you drew it from me. You should have sworn anything, to put her in a good humor again."

Mrs. Brooke looked indignant. "I am not going to tell untruths for the sake of her money."

"I would tell mountains of untruths for it. What would I not say and swear?—I would even maintain that she was sweet-tempered. She will never forgive you."

"It is vexing, but it can't be helped. I am sorry, for Richard's sake. Esther, what a run that book would have if only we could put a flyleaf into it saying, "This book has cost the author a legacy of 70,000*l*." I really do think a generous public would hasten to make good the loss. However, I shall always be grieved to think that I have hurt her feelings."

"Never mind her feelings. She has none. I don't care a pin for that part of the matter. I am thinking of poor Richard—it must be a fearful disappointment to him. Vincent would have killed me if I had done such a thing. Selina, tell me about Olive and Mr. Ardrossan. She will accept him, I suppose?"

"Mr. Ardrossan! Is he likely to propose to her?"

Mrs. Raymond stared—this vernal simplicity, this mental opacity, was quite beyond her power of comprehension.

"He certainly has been a great deal here lately, and we are glad to see him. He comes every other day."

"Well, what does that look like?"

"I have never remarked that he was fond of Olive."

"Will she accept him if he offers to her?" interrupted Mrs. Raymond impatiently.

"But he is far too old for her—he must be twenty years older than she is."

"If he were forty years older it would be a splendid match for her. Selina, do show a little more worldly wisdom. I'll go and speak to Olive. Where is she?"

She went to her niece. She approached the subject daintily and delicately; but as soon as Olive caught a glimpse of her meaning she was up in arms in a moment and cried, "Aunt Esther, you are as bad as my step-mother! That is just the way in which she used to talk to me as soon as any gentleman had said three or four civil things to me."

"Quite right too. Only a part of a mother's duty. Olive dear, your step-mother, as you call her, is gone, and nothing I say can make any difference now, but I must say that you treated that poor woman very ill. Let me speak—don't be vexed with me. I am your aunt, and have known you since you were a baby—you really treated her cruelly. Forgive me, but I must for once remind you that the circumstances were peculiar; and if when she came to England she had left you to yourself and not taken you everywhere with her, as she did, no one could have blamed her. She was not bound to feel much interest in you, but she did. She devoted herself to you all the time she was here, and never once left you for any pleasant visit of her own."

"She was afraid to leave me. She was keeping watch to see that certain persons of whom she was much afraid did not approach me. She was in constant terror lest they should tell me things which it was important to her to conceal."

"Oh, nonsense, Olive; your Aunt Selina has infected you with her love of imagining plots for novels."

"Aunt Esther, this is a painful subject, but my step-mother has gone, and you may as well know the truth about her. You will always blame me if you don't. It must not be known beyond our own family. Go to Aunt Selina and ask her to tell you what we know about my step-mother. I would rather you should hear it from her than from me."

Mrs. Raymond began to be afraid that Olive was mad.

More than once lately she had seen signs of great mental excitement in her, and feared that there was a danger of her being attacked by her mother's terrible malady. She looked anxiously at her now, and crept away to Mrs. Brooke, not really believing that there was anything to hear, but wishful to pacify Olive.

After some time she returned, looking pale and nervous, and as if she had received a shock she would not readily forget. She stooped and kissed Olive, and said, "Dear child, your aunts have always loved you; they must now love you more than ever. What I have heard makes me still more anxious to say what I came to say. Don't be vexed with me if I try to gather from you what your intentions are with respect to Mr. Ardrossan. It is so important that you should have a home of your own."

"Is it not rather indelicate to begin to settle what you will do about a gentleman who has never so much as shown that he has any intention of asking you to marry him?" cried Olive.

"Oh, it is constantly done," said Mrs. Raymond. "You must have an idea what you will do."

"He is very kind to me, but he does not care for me in the way you seem to think."

"I know better. Olive he is a charming man—so handsome, so intellectual, so distinguished-looking."

"Yes," said Olive warmly, "he really is."

"Oh, I see it is all right. I was sure you could not be blind to his attractions. I need say no more."

"I am not blind to his attractions. I like him immensely and it would be very ungrateful if I didn't; but I must tell you that, supposing such a very unlikely thing happened as that he should propose to me, I should not accept him."

"But that's absurd—so absurd that I can't believe it. Have you any reason for refusing him?"

"No very special reason," replied Olive, looking rather confused.

"Then I may as well tell you that there is a very special reason why you ought to accept him—why you

must accept him, indeed. If you refuse him a very terrible thing will happen—there will be a fearful scandal.”

Olive looked, as she felt, intensely curious, but waited for her aunt to continue, and Mrs. Raymond slowly and painfully revealed to her that when Lady Brooke came to England she had felt her resources entirely inadequate to clothing a beautiful girl like her for fashionable society, where endless changes of costume and the most lavish expenditure are required, and she had adopted a plan not by any means unusual in the set to which she belonged. She had taken her to Madame Filoselle, a lady who, as it was well known—though such things are not spoken of—was in the habit of taking six young ladies under her protection as it were, and clothing them entirely, from their first entrance into society until their marriage. This she always did with the utmost liberality and secrecy, but, of course, under certain conditions. The first was that the young lady herself was so beautiful and attractive in every way that it was absolutely certain that she would be sought in marriage by men of rank and wealth, if she only was enabled by Madame Filoselle's assistance to appear to advantage in the society which they frequented. Then, too, she was to make this good marriage within a reasonable time. Thirdly, Madame Filoselle's bill—which would naturally be much larger because of her having to wait for the money, and because the transaction involved some risk—was to be paid by the bride soon after she had secured her rich husband, after which common gratitude would demand that she should continue to order all her dresses from the arbiter of her fate—Madame Filoselle. Mrs. Raymond told this to Olive in her own words and with many assurances that it was a common enough arrangement. People did not talk of such things, of course, but every one of a certain class knew quite well that they were done.

Olive heard her in silence and the deepest shame. Her head sank lower and lower, her hands were clasped in helpless dismay; she felt as if she could not find words to speak. Her aunt was pleased to see that she recognized

the gravity of the situation; she was certain that she would make no difficulty now. Mr. Ardrossan was the rock of safety to whom she would fly and cling—what else could she do?

“So that’s the long and short of my story,” said Mrs. Raymond. “Don’t let it vex you. One is apt to be startled at a thing of this kind first hearing of it, but it seemed the best arrangement we could make to secure your happiness, and it’s continually done. There are always six girls in society who are dressed this way. Women like Madame Filoselle have it in their power to do an immensity of good. Many a pretty, nice girl who has a good home and husband of the right sort would be in a very different plight if she had not had the good fortune to please Madame Filoselle when taken to her. You are astonished, I see,” added Mrs. Raymond, who was a little uneasy at Olive’s strange looks and silence. “Of course you must be. But you must own that Madame Filoselle has kept her part of the bargain most handsomely. She grudges nothing when once she takes a fancy and sees that her efforts will be rewarded with success. She took to you amazingly. She is beginning to be rather impatient, though. You see, most of her young ladies get something settled during their first season. She is beginning to fidget a little, but I am sure she will go on being nice for some time to come—quite long enough for you to do all you want.”

All the blood in Olive’s body seemed to rush to her face as she said, “So help me God, I will never wear one thing that has come from her house again!”

“You dislike the idea of the arrangement so much?” said Mrs. Raymond, without the most remote conception of how Olive loathed the ignominy to which she had so unconsciously been pledged. “I can readily imagine your doing so. We won’t speak of it again—only it is right you should know of it—you would be acting in the dark if you didn’t. But don’t worry yourself, dear, it will be all right. You will marry Mr. Ardrossan—he is a charming man, and, what is better still, he is as rich as

a Jew. She won't expect to be paid the whole sum you owe her at once—you can give it to her little by little, as you have it."

"How horrible! How shameful! Do you mean that I am to steal it when I can do so unobserved?" asked Olive bitterly. "Aunt, we may as well understand each other. If I loved Mr. Ardrossan so much that I knew refusing him actually meant dying, I would still refuse him. After what you have told me, nothing should ever induce me to accept him. You and my step-mother made this bargain. I know what kind of a woman she is, but I did think that you would be worlds above having anything to do with such degradation as this!"

"Olive, say what you like—it is natural—you are taken by surprise. I won't be offended with you. I must put the matter plainly before you. You will be obliged to marry Mr. Ardrossan, or some one else who is rich enough to pay for all the things you have had. They must be paid for—that woman won't go without her money."

"I would die rather than do such an infamous thing."

"Nonsense, dear! Just look what much worse things than this are done every day by people, and good people too, for the sake of securing things they want. Have you ever seen any poor man, or even any rich one, whom you could honestly say was more attractive than Mr. Ardrossan?"

Olive blushed deeply and said, "I think I have."

"Rich or poor?"

"Poor, or at least what you would call poor."

"And does he admire you? I mean is he likely to ask you to marry him?"

"Oh, I don't know—he might."

"Well, it would have been very silly to accept this poor gentleman at any time, but now it is quite out of the question. This Filoselle business makes it impossible for you to marry a poor man."

"On the contrary, it makes it impossible for me to marry a rich one!" cried Olive with great determination. "I would rather die than do that, now that I

know what a shameful confession I should have to make to him."

"Oh, nonsense; the thing is done, and can't be undone. You may as well make the confession to a rich man who loves you, and who can pay your bill without more effort than signing a check implies. Your poor man would have to be told all the same, and could do nothing but look dismal; and there's no great help in that. Besides, the talk would be dreadful—newspapers catch at good gossip like this so eagerly—it would be placarded in every paper in London."

Olive looked shocked but immovable. "I shall pack up all the things I ever had from Madame Filoselle," cried she, "and return them to her. You can tell her that she need never expect me to marry a rich man to pay her, for I never shall."

"You must be mad, Olive!"

"I don't care if I am. I had rather be mad than bad, and I should have been a wretch if I had made this agreement with Madame Filoselle."

"Don't waste time in talk of that kind. Don't you see that the woman must be paid? I don't know what you have had during the twelve months that she has dressed you, but I am sure her bill must be nearly a thousand pounds—your Court-dress cost 70*l*. You say you will return the things. That would only enrage her; it wouldn't save a penny. They were supplied to you and worn by you, and she will make you pay for them, whether you return them or not."

"I will not have them here to remind me of anything so disgraceful."

"You are not very polite, my dear. I told you the idea was partly mine. I am not usually supposed to lend my countenance to disgraceful things." And as she spoke Mrs. Raymond looked at Olive for some admission that the sanction which she had given to the arrangement was a guarantee of its rightfulness, but more than one of her aunt's bits of doubtful morality was rankling in Olive's mind, and she could give no such assurance. Mrs. Ray-

mond began to see that matters were desperate and to make moving appeals. They too were useless.

"What a disgrace!" gasped Mrs. Raymond; "what a fearful disgrace!"

"A little disgrace is better than a big one. It would be much worse if I did as you wish," cried Olive warmly.

"You are mad; you are hopelessly wrong-headed. I must get your other relations to speak to you." But on second thoughts Mrs. Raymond found that this would only add to her distress, for, unhappy lady, to whom was she to turn? There was not one of Olive's relations who would take a sensible view of the subject. Selina would be worse than Olive; Dr. Brooke would be a thousand times worse than Selina. He would be perfectly frantic at the very idea of such a degrading transaction. Mrs. Ullathorne would be more indignant than either, for such doings belonged to a world which was quite beyond her ken. Besides, she was in the vein for taking offense with her relatives and cutting them out of her will. She most certainly must not be told, any sacrifice was better than that. "Olive, promise me not to speak of this to any one just yet. I will go to Madame Filoselle and see if I can get her to be reasonable. I must see if your Uncle Vincent can afford to pay her. I know he has no spare money at present—he very seldom has; but to avert disgrace, perhaps—" And the poor lady sighed. Then she added piteously, "Perhaps after all you may marry Mr. Ardrossan?"

"Never!" cried Olive; "I would not do such a thing for the world."

In the deepest distress and agitation Mrs. Raymond took her departure. She was forced to go and say a word or two to Mrs. Brooke before she left the house.

Mrs. Brooke was reading—she had not had leisure for such an enjoyment for years. She looked up and said rather ruefully, "After nearly two hours of solid talk you must have persuaded poor Olive into any marriage you wish," but Mrs. Raymond's looks showed no sense of success; all she said was, "Olive is very vexing; she says she likes Mr. Ardrossan immensely, but will refuse him if

he offers. I am terribly disappointed." Mrs. Brooke looked quite composed. Her theory was that if a girl wanted to marry a man she did marry him, and if she didn't want to marry him there was no more to be said.

Seeing she was slow to express sympathy, Mrs. Raymond cried indignantly, "She is a stupid goose. This will be the second good marriage she has missed. She will get a crooked stick at last, and I for one shall be very glad. She deserves to do so."

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Brooke, who was certain that Olive's views on marriage were much more likely to be such as she herself could sympathize with than those of her worldly-minded sister-in-law. "Oh, no, when Olive marries she will choose well. Mr. Ardrossan is far too old."

"Then she ought to have taken Sir John Ellerton—he was young enough."

"He was too stupid; he had nothing in him."

"Then she ought to take Mr. Ardrossan; he is clever enough."

"Wait till the right man comes."

"There is a right man, only he is a wrong one. There is some one whom she fancies. I have made her own it. Do you know who he can be?"

"I haven't the least idea; not the least idea."

"Nor have I," said Mrs. Raymond. "He must be some very insignificant, stupid sort of person, or some of us would have noticed him talking to her. I am quite out of patience with Olive—I never saw such a stupidly self-willed girl."

"I have great faith in Olive," said Mrs. Brooke calmly. "Sir John Ellerton, with his youth, and good looks, and health, and wealth, was the golden casket, which seemed the most attractive of all to the common eye; Mr. Ardrossan, pale, refined, and learned, but already falling into the rank of veterans, is the silver casket; but somewhere or other lurks the humbler-looking but infinitely more precious leaden casket, to which Olive only possesses the true key. She will choose for herself—she knows whom she can love and reverence, and she won't give her love lightly. I don't

mind her being difficult to please, or taking a poor man when she might have a rich one; I shall be quite content with the leaden casket, if it holds what is best for her."

Mrs. Raymond made a gesture of extreme impatience. "You are a novelist," she said, "and you think that quoting a poet or bringing in a fanciful allusion settles a difficult question. Gold and silver and leaden caskets have nothing to do with what we are talking about. We can't have Olive wanting to marry a man who is not able to keep her!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

"Dass muss ich noch."—*Iphigenia*.

MR. ARDROSSAN had passed the mature age of forty-five, and had never until now been seriously in love. His life had been one of activity in many directions. His father was a merchant, who had rather surprised the world by the enormous fortune which he left behind him. John had been the most quiet and assiduous of students; well liked at school and college, but with a strong turn for visiting the poor, and with slightly quixotic views about the duties attached to wealth. His eldest brother was lost by a slip on an Alpine glacier; his soldier brother was carried off by a fever in India; and his father died within a year of these misfortunes. John Ardrossan was called to rule in his stead. He did his work well, but he never gave up the work which was dear to him before wealth and position were thrust on him. As soon as he could he resigned his place in the firm in favor of a cousin on the mother's side, and then toiled at his various social reforms with the enthusiasm of a Romney Leigh, but with the keen shrewdness of a thorough man of the world. Year after year he spent with heart and brain absorbed in these things to the exclusion of all else, and so it might have continued to the end if he had not met Olive Brooke. He admired her as he had never admired any woman before. She was

beautiful with the beauty he most valued, intelligent, docile, and in every way charming to him, and he felt that if he could prevail on her to be his wife he had nothing left to wish for. He could not well measure her feeling for himself. She was unmistakably fond of him, but he sometimes, nay, often, feared that the affection she gave him was only that of a child for a father. He had, however, watched her narrowly, and had ascertained that there was no one whom she liked better, unless, perhaps, it was Morrison. He was quite aware that Morrison loved her, but believed she had refused him. He had seen nothing of Morrison for some time—principally because he had taken no steps to do so, all his time having been divided between Bethnal Green and Olive. He did not know that Morrison was now engaged to another woman. Olive too was ignorant of this, and was likely to remain so until Miss Lettice either returned to London or could screw herself up to the task of writing a letter especially addressed to Olive herself, for no one else was likely to care for such a fragment of information. Since Mrs. Brooke's renunciation of novel-writing, to which she adhered religiously, Mr. Ardrossan had lost many little opportunities which he had hitherto enjoyed of seeing Olive alone. He had, however, used his time in trying to read her thoughts, and was on the whole hopeful. On a fine afternoon at the very end of April he ran briskly up certain stone stairs in Pall Mall, for he expected to see Olive very soon after he had got to the top of them. It was the private view of the Old Water Color Society, and he knew that she was to be there. She was standing by one of the screens nearest to the door, and was wholly absorbed in the contemplation of a drawing. Eager buyers brushed past her, knots of connoisseurs pressed close, from whose lips fell trippingly cant phrases of praise or blame; reviewers, note-book in hand, commented on mysteries of execution. She heard nothing, saw nothing but that bit of cunningly-stained paper; and when he saw her eager interest, Mr. Ardrossan, the envy of half the young men in London, would willingly have resigned all the great possessions which they coveted, to change places with Morrison, whom

they would have despised, but who had that subtle something men call genius, who had golden youth and hope, and, more than all, the power of making Olive's eyes glow thus with admiration.

She had changed her style of dress. Hitherto Mr. Ardrossan had always seen her in the dainty but elaborate confections of Madame Filoselle; but all Madame Filoselle's confections had been sent back to her, and to-day Olive wore a picturesque last-century dress, and he had never seen her look so well. It was part of her wardrobe before Lady Brooke came back from India, and its color was a strange dull red. She wore a soft hat of the same material and a tiny frilled cape, and just as she was leaving the house her Aunt Selina had completed her costume by thrusting a "posey" of Lent lilies into her hand. Mr. Ardrossan approached her, but still her mind was occupied with the drawing on the screen before her. "Look at it," said she; "it is Mr. Morrison's. Don't you think it wonderfully good?"

"I think it splendid," he answered warmly.

"Every one seems to think so. What would I not give to paint like that! Mr. Ardrossan, how is it that one man can paint a picture like that, while others do such miserably poor, dull things?"

He smiled, for he knew she could answer this question she was putting quite as well as he could, but he said, "Besides brushes and colors, and skill to use them, you must have what Morrison has: intense love of the thing he is trying to represent, and the mind of a poet."

"And he used to be so unpoetical! At least I used to think so—you know we knew each other when we were both children."

"Yes, he has told me so. Have you seen him lately?"

"Oh, no, I never see him. He never comes to my aunt's. She invites him, but he always refuses."

Mr. Ardrossan did not understand these two. If Olive had refused Morrison, as he half thought she had when last he saw them together, how could she expect him to come to the house where she was? And what did this re-

gret imply? He ventured on another remark, hoping that she would say something in answer to it which would help him to see his way a little better. "I met him in Harley Street one Tuesday evening. I am sure you remember his being there, don't you?—you had some talk then."

"Yes," replied Olive, blushing slightly. "We talked of old times, when we knew each other, but I am afraid I was not so nice to him as I should have been if my head had not been so full of other things. It was the time you were helping me to find Mary Gardiner. I could think of no one then but my poor mother."

"Ah, I know, I see, I understand," said he, and he feared he did understand. He was silent, and during that silence was nerving himself for the terrible effort which it would cost him to do something which he began to see would have to be done. "Is Morrison here?" he at length asked.

"Yes, my aunt said she saw him—with Dr. Ullathorne and a young lady, I think she said."

"I have such good news for him! I met one of the Ellesmere Gallery people last night, and made a point of asking about our friend's pictures. They are splendidly hung and immensely admired. They are both centers in the large room."

"You are going to tell him?" said Olive, looking much delighted.

"Yes. Would you like to be the bearer of the good news?"

"Yes—no; but I should like to see how he looks when you tell him."

"No, you shall tell him, and I will be the one to watch his looks," said he, and he mentally added, "And yours too, after which I think I shall know my fate." He shrank from the pain of hearing her refuse him—he wished to keep her as a friend. He had lived forty-and-five years without her love; and, if it needs must be, had strength to go on to the end alone. He set his fate on the result of the brief interview which he was now arranging to witness from afar. It must not be supposed that these two had enjoyed an un-

molested *file-à-file*. They had been interrupted a dozen times. Mr. Ardrossan looked round for a seat for Olive, and just as he had found one, Morrison, Miss Keithley, and Dr. Ullathorne came towards the screen where they had been standing so long. Rose Keithley was insisting on seeing all Morrison's drawings. Olive did not see who was coming; she had just turned away to sit down, but before she could do so was stopped by Mrs. Brooke. Mrs. Brooke never minded disturbing lovers. What would become of novels and novel-writers if that were not done constantly? "Oh, here you are, Olive!" cried she. "I have been having such a pleasant chat with the editor of the 'Quixotic Magazine'! I would have come to you, though, only I saw you were with Mr. Ardrossan, but I'll stay with you now. Oh, no, by the way, I can't, but I'll come back in a minute. There is a man just coming into the room whom I must speak to—if I don't catch him now he will be swallowed up in the crowd, and I shall have no chance." And she hurried away, for she had caught sight of a celebrated critic, who had, in a review of "Cross and Fifty," just complained that the character of the cross lady was altogether unnatural.

"It is rather hard," she said to him, "that, after losing a legacy of seventy thousand pounds for making that character so very like nature, I should be told by you that it is not like at all!"

"What's so false as truth is?" cried he gayly. "Browning tells you that, and this gallery will tell you that a piece of literal transcript is a perfect blot in a work which claims to be imaginative at all."

But Mrs. Brooke felt she must argue that point, and began to do so.

In the mean time Dr. Ullathorne had espied Mr. Ardrossan, who had seated himself and was keeping a place for Olive; but Olive was waylaid by admiring friends, and Morrison had seen her, and was waiting until she was released by them. Dr. Ullathorne was tired of pictures and of standing in a warm and crowded room. He dropped down into the seat which was being kept for Olive by Mr.

Ardrossan's side, and soon afterwards made his unwilling niece squeeze herself in also, introducing her as a "born artist" herself.

"I envy you the possession of so delightful a faculty," said Mr. Ardrossan, looking into her pretty, frank face with some admiration.

"Oh, there's Halstead!" cried Dr. Ullathorne. "I must go and speak to him. I want to hear about a Select Committee he is on. Rose, will you stay here till I come back? Don't let me lose you."

"I will watch over Miss Keithley's safety," said Mr. Ardrossan, hoping, however, that she would not prevent his watching something else in which he took far more interest. "Do you think this a good Exhibition?" he asked.

"Yes, very, but I like seeing the people as well as the pictures," said she. "Don't be shocked. The dresses are so odd, and so picturesque! What a pretty girl that is! But what a dress! Still I cannot help rather liking it." She was looking at Olive, who, finding herself alone, and very near Morrison, was at first too shy to approach him even with her good news. She returned to his picture, thus showing some ignorance of artistic nature, for if she wanted him to join her she might have known that one of his own pictures would only help to keep him away.

"That is Miss Brooke," said Mr. Ardrossan. "People think her very beautiful."

"That Miss Brooke?" cried Miss Keithley, and for a moment she was too much overcome by the sight to say more. Mr. Ardrossan never even observed her comparative silence; he was looking at Morrison, who was standing close behind Olive, hesitating in what way to present himself. Had the two lookers on been mean enough to hear what they were saying, this is what they would have heard: "Mr. Morrison"—Olive was, of course, the speaker—"is it rude to tell an artist to his face what pleasure his pictures give you? I hope it is not, for I want so to say it to you!"

He colored with delight, and cried, "They can hardly

give you as much pleasure as these words of yours are giving me."

"Mr. Ardrossan has intrusted a message to me," she continued, with downcast eyes, for she was beginning to think that she had been somewhat over-bold in taking this office on herself.

"Oh, I saw him in the room a quarter of an hour ago. I don't know where he is now. May I hear the message?"

"It is this. He was dining somewhere last night where he saw one of the Ellesmere Gallery authorities—some one who knows all about where the pictures hang, I mean, and he made him say where yours are placed. They are hung beautifully; both of them are centers, and they are immensely admired by every one."

He was gazing at her with eyes full of loving admiration, and if she had raised hers she must have seen it. Two who were witnessing this scene from afar saw more of it than she did.

Olive never looked up; she dared not, for she had something else to say. "Mr. Ardrossan allowed me to be the one to tell you this, because he knew it would give me pleasure, and it does give me great pleasure."

He did not speak so quickly as she expected him to do; he was thinking how strange it was that she should be the one to tell him this, how strange that he could not enjoy his good fortune as he ought. The bitterness overcame the sweet.

"You don't seem half happy enough about it," cried she. "I am astonished at your taking it so calmly. Two pictures in such splendid places! Why, it is quite an achievement."

Scarcely had this last word crossed her lips than she could have bitten her tongue off for using it. A speech of her own long ago flashed into her mind. She remembered how she had assured him of her constancy, how she had entreated him to put it to the test hereafter, when they were older, when he would find her always ready to remember that she had promised to marry him—only before he claimed her he must have some achievements. What

malignant demon of mischief had thrust that word on to her lips now? She blushed; she said two or three stammering words; she looked up; she saw that he remembered the word and the occasion on which she had last used it quite as well as she herself did, and that he was struck by the use she had made of it now. Their eyes met, and for one brief moment they seemed to see far down into the depths of each other's hearts. What Olive saw made her turn crimson. "I said that word by mistake," cried she in an agony of nervousness, thus unconsciously throwing away all defense. Then she tried to recover herself, and with an affectation of gayety cried, "Now, own that you are pleased. Is it not good news?"

"Yes, it is good news; but now I wish it had but come sooner."

"Mr. Morrison," cried Mrs. Brooke, who, having done with her critic, had now time to look after Olive, and joined her and Morrison at this trying moment, "I congratulate you on your pictures here and elsewhere. Their praises are on every tongue. I congratulate you too on something else. I have just seen Dr. Ullathorne, and he has told me that you are engaged to be married. Did you know that Mr. Morrison was going to be married, Olive?"

"No," said Olive, "I did not, but I am very pleased to hear of it. I wish you every happiness." And she held out her hand to Morrison, whose confusion was so great that he hardly saw it.

"You will bring Miss Keithley to see me, won't you?" continued Mrs. Brooke. "I know her relations, the Ullathornes, of course, and I shall be delighted to make her acquaintance. Come, Olive; I have not seen any of the drawings at the other end of the room. Don't let us go home having seen nothing. Good-by for the present, Mr. Morrison. I dare say we shall come across each other again before the afternoon is over."

While this scene was taking place between Olive and Mr. Morrison, Rose Keithley and Mr. Ardrossan were still sitting watching them. But even Mr. Ardrossan, who

was so engrossed by what he saw, could not fail to observe that his silent little companion had grown alarmingly pale. "They ought to open their windows wider at these places," said he. "I am sure you are suffering from the heat."

"Yes, the heat—it is hot," said she drearily—"very hot."

Then came the crisis—then looks passed between the two which could only be interpreted in one way. Morrison and Miss Brooke were lovers who had somehow been estranged, but in their hearts were lovers still. Then Mr. Ardrossan cared to see no more; he pressed his lips together, turned to Miss Keithley, and wished that her uncle would come and look after her and let him get home. But her face was whiter than ever; and just as he was going to offer to take her into the air Dr. Ullathorne came back, too full of some conversation in which he had just been taking a part which pleased him to notice mere changes of expression or complexion.

"Miss Keithley is feeling the heat," said Mr. Ardrossan. "I think she ought not to stay any longer in this crowded room."

"Oh, bless my soul, Rose, what a white face you have! Let us get away at once. I don't see your friend Morrison. I suppose he will think it very unkind of us to go without him. I'll look for him, but it is no easy matter to find any one in a place like this."

Miss Keithley could have pointed him out quite easily. She did not. She moved a little farther along the seat, so as to lose sight of the two whom she had been watching with such pain. She tried to make her uncle come out of sight also. "Sit here with me, dear," said she to him. "Let us wait a little longer. I have a very particular reason for wishing William not to be disturbed for a while."

When she said this Mr. Ardrossan could have worshipped her. Dr. Ullathorne's words had informed him of the engagement, but Miss Keithley's own words told him far more. She had seen all—knew all—knew that she had only a second place in the heart of the man to whom she had plighted her troth—that, somehow or other, he had been held apart from Olive Brooke, the woman whom he

best loved. She was aware of all this, and yet her instinctive impulse was to sacrifice her own happiness to his. He saw this, and recognized her as a noble, high-minded woman.

"Ah, you don't want him disturbed, you mercenary little thing!" said Dr. Ullathorne benignly. "You think he is selling pictures and getting good commissions. Well, you are right—the mill must have grist."

Rose Keithley heard this, and even smiled a sickly smile. In watching her Mr. Ardrossan forgot his own sorrows, but he wished he could have stopped that speech being made. He did his best to prevent any further aggravation of her sufferings by engaging the worthy divine in conversation. They talked, and Rose Keithley sat patiently waiting for what must come. After some little time Morrison joined them. He looked quietly sad, as if he had gone through some scene which had tried him terribly, but was firmly resolved to do what he thought right. He smiled gravely when he saw Mr. Ardrossan. "Oh, you are here!" said he. "I am so glad. And you have been introduced to Miss Keithley, I see—that is a pleasure I had hoped to enjoy myself." Then he turned to her and said, "Rose, dear, I am afraid you are very tired. I hope you have not been waiting for me?"

CHAPTER XLIV.

Good phrases are surely, and even were, commendable.

Merry Wives of Windsor.

MADAME FILOSELLE, ill-content with her interview with Mrs. Raymond, and wishing for a prompt understanding with some member of the Brooke family more easy of access than Sir Chesterfield himself, went without delay to the moneyed one—Mrs. Ullathorne. In the interest of public morality it was well that she did so, for never, perhaps, in the whole course of the milliner's previous existence did she hear such an unqualified statement

of any other person's opinion of her conduct as she did from Mrs. Ullathorne, who told her she was a scheming swindler, a cunning thief of the very meanest kind, an abominable creature who ought at once to be sent to jail! She repudiated all obligation on her part to pay the debt—she emphatically declined to touch pitch in any shape. She said she only hoped Madame Filoselle would bring the matter before the public, as she was now threatening to do, for it would be the best means of drawing attention to such scandals. As to the disgrace to her family which would ensue, she professed not to care a pin for that. Her niece, Miss Brooke—the only one connected with the affair for whom she felt any real regard—had been perfectly ignorant of what was being done, and had indignantly returned every fragment of apparel or ornament she had ever had from Madame Filoselle directly she was informed of it. As for Mrs. Raymond and Lady Brooke, Mrs. Ullathorne knew what she thought about them, and the less said on that subject for the present the better. Mrs. Ullathorne utterly disregarded all threats, would listen to no arguments; in fact, poured out such a torrent of violent abuse, that Madame Filoselle, who when she entered had felt herself strong enough to move mountains, had just energy enough left to creep out of the room and feebly make her way back to her carriage.

Mrs. Ullathorne did not recover her usual equanimity for hours. She did not much wish to do so. She felt herself called on to act, and to let every one who had been connected with such a shameful transaction feel distinctly and permanently the worse for it. She took pen and paper, and then sat staring at the white page before her for some time, for no words which she could think of seemed strong enough to convey even a tithe of what she felt. She finally gave up the attempt to find any that would be adequate to her purpose. "I will just write quietly," said she to herself. "I dare say a simple letter will be the best. After all, it is the matter which is important, and not the manner."

ESTHER RAYMOND (she began), I always thought you a terrible fool, but I did not know that you were a knave as well. Your milliner, whom you employed in that disgraceful manner to dress out Olive to catch a rich husband, has been here at my house, to try to extort money from me. I have told her what I think of her, and that I hope and trust she will make the whole thing public, for it will only hurt those who richly deserve to be hurt. She knows what I think of her, so now let me tell you what I think of you. On second thoughts that would require time, and I don't feel very well, and it is of no use to make myself worse by writing to a person whom I despise as much as I despise you. Keep away from me; I shall never again be able to bring myself to be decently civil to you. Any one who could be a party to such a bargain as you entered into with that disreputable, swindling milliner is not fit for my society, though you have always affected to look down on my friends. Don't come to see me. Don't expect to be the better for anything that I may happen to have to leave behind me when I die, for I certainly shall never let any of my money go to any one of your stamp. My mind is fully made up, and I am glad you have furnished me with this opportunity of knowing your true character while I have time to use my knowledge.

This done Mrs. Ullathorne read her letter over—was pleased at the calmness and reticence she had displayed in it—sealed and lost no time in dispatching it.

Early next morning Mrs. Raymond called. She was denied admittance. Immediately afterwards Mrs. Ullathorne ordered out the family coach and went to Harley Street to tell Dr. Brooke what had occurred. "I have seen Madame Filoselle myself," said he quietly; "she came here yesterday. My dear Mary, I don't wonder at your being shocked."

"'Shocked' does not express it, and never will," cried Mrs. Ullathorne, making a fan of her handkerchief and fanning herself in uneasy desperation.

"It hardly does," said Dr. Brooke, who felt the disgrace most keenly. "I am not surprised at Olive's step-mother—she is capable of anything; but that Esther should be guilty of such a thing!"

"And Esther will say that we are only shocked because we are not in society," said Mrs. Ullathorne, to whom this assertion of her sister's had always been a dire insult, though she carefully concealed her feelings.

"Well, we shall hear no more of Madame Filoselle," said Dr. Brooke; "I have arranged to pay her."

"You have? How foolish! how vexing! She does not deserve to have one penny."

"I think it more consistent with the family honor that she should be paid. Olive wore the clothes."

"Yes, but you may be quite certain that that creature charged twenty times as much as they were worth."

"I said so. She is content to take half, and I have promised her a check in a month's time."

"Richard, your means are not so good as mine—let me pay her."

"Oh, it's settled now. Besides, I consider Olive my own child."

Mrs. Ullathorne was deeply touched by her brother's sacrifice, and by his care for the family honor. With all her pretended indifference, she disliked the exposure immensely. She was silent for some minutes; then she said suddenly, "Richard, I was vexed with Selina about that novel of hers, but I begin to think that is no reason for punishing you. I shall have to see my lawyer to-morrow about canceling a very good legacy I had left to those odious Raymonds. I'll get him to restore that bit about you and your family. I'll not leave anything to Selina, though; she deserves to be punished for what she did. Besides, with her talents she can easily originate enough to keep her."

"You will do as you like, Mary," said Dr. Brooke, who had no great faith in wills which were remade so frequently.

"It is very kind of you to think of leaving me anything—leaving my family, I mean, for you will outlive me by a great number of years."

"Do you really think I shall?" cried Mrs. Ullathorne very eagerly; but, with a better and more kindly and truer after-thought, she added, "Richard, it would be a very great grief to me to lose you. After all, you and I are the two who are most alike in character. We are Calverleys; we take after my mother; all the rest are more or less

Brookes. Don't be low about your health; it is better, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, much. In fact, my doctor says I am well; but I am not so strong as you."

"I am told that Olive sent back everything she ever had from that woman."

"Everything! I don't know that it was of much use except to mark her disgrace."

"Give her this check for a hundred pounds—she will want new clothes, poor girl. She is a fine girl, Richard—very like what I used to be. I often look at her and think so. Good morning."

Richard smiled a little, but he was touched by his sister's rough kindness.

When Mrs. Ullathorne got home she found a note from Mrs. Raymond, and, much as she wished to send it back unopened, could not resist her desire to read it. Mrs. Raymond protested that Lady Brooke was the one who was responsible for the Filoselle contract—it was she who had proposed it, negotiated it, and carried it out. Mrs. Raymond entreated her sister to suspend her judgment until she herself had time to write to Lady Brooke, to make her own that it was so. It would be cruel, she said, not to give her time to be able to prove herself innocent.

Mrs. Ullathorne smiled with joyous bitterness. "What a state she is in because she thinks she will lose her legacy! Life is uncertain, especially mine. I'll make my will to-morrow, as I said I would. I must have Richard's money made safe."

Meantime Mrs. Raymond was writing thus to Lady Brooke:—

DEAR HONORA,—Madame Filoselle is clamorous for payment. She has been to Mary Ullathorne's. Sister Mary is furious, especially with poor me. I am made to bear the whole brunt of it. It is very unjust and cruel of her, and she is so angry that she refuses to see or speak to me. Now, I require you at once to write to her and take the whole blame on yourself. I positively insist on your doing this. If you do not the consequences will be serious to me, but they will be much more serious to you, for I will at once write and tell Chesterfield all that was made known by Mary Gardiner to Olive and to Dr.

Ullathorne. You see I know all. I must also say that if you had used the five hundred pounds which Chesterfield gave you for the express purpose of defraying all expenses connected with Olive's introduction into society in the manner in which he expected you to spend it, and not in bribing Hannah Deanham to quit the country again, all this vexation might have been spared us. I know that you received it, for Chesterfield mentioned that in a letter to Vincent. I insist, therefore, on your taking the entire blame on yourself. It will do you no harm, for I am sorry to say that no member of our family can think worse of you than they do already, and nothing else will restore me to Sister Mary's good opinion. If she remains angry with me my life won't be worth having, for Vincent would never forgive me, and no one can put things right but you. The moment, therefore, that you receive this you must at once sit down and write as I wish, or I will at once write and put Chesterfield into possession of every fact connected with his wife's trial and his marriage with you. I am not making empty threats—I shall most assuredly do as I say.

Thus wrote Mrs. Raymond, and forthwith dispatched her letter; and if when Lady Brooke left England she had not, as usual, departed with a lie on her tongue, she would have received it. Every one had expected that she would go first to Lausanne and take some of her girls back to India with her. She, however, wanted a good excuse for again leaving her husband, in case his doubts about his treatment of his first wife once more made his companionship oppressive to her. In order, therefore, to account for leaving them at school a little longer she had pretended to Mrs. Raymond that Chesterfield had written a letter urgently desiring her return without one day's delay. She had set out with apparent haste, but had spent a fortnight in Paris. She had no particular reason for wishing to stay there—she was only taking her journey easily and pleasantly; but the consequence was that Mrs. Raymond's letter reached India before she did; and Sir Chesterfield, seeing that it was from his sister Esther, opened it and read it.

CHAPTER XLV.

Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease.—BLAKE.

MR. ARDROSSAN spent the night after the Private View in a state of considerable restlessness and disappointment. He had not known before how much he loved Olive. He felt, too, that he had become a good deal older all at once, and fervently wished that some one like Olive had crossed his path many years before. Puritan, philosopher, philanthropist as he was, he had always been thoroughly popular in society. He had never been tempted to isolate himself for his principles or to regard the gay world from the standpoint of a "superior person." But he had not by any means intended to remain a bachelor. Had time, really gone so fast? It seemed to him only the other day that he had left Oxford—only the other day that, full of enthusiasm and zeal, he had taken the chair at his first meeting.

Perhaps he would have suffered much more if, along with his own little grief, he had not had Miss Keithley's much larger one to think of. He could not forget her or the look of keen anguish which had come into her eyes as they watched her dearest hope of happiness passing away from her. "She was wonderfully brave at the time," thought he; "but what must she be feeling now? She is a splendid girl—constant and loyal, and thoroughly unselfish. What a fellow Morrison is, to have two such women in love with him! I can read the future clearly—to-morrow, or perhaps in a week or so, to do it in an unsuspecting, quiet manner—I fancy she is one who likes to do all quietly—she will write to him, or send for him, and will tell him that she finds she has entirely mistaken the nature of her own feelings and can not honestly let the engagement go on. From what I have seen of her I am sure that she will do

this in a perfectly composed and natural way, so as to cause no suspicion in his mind that she has discovered his love for another. She will leave him free to propose to Miss Brooke, and will take care that he can do so with ease of mind and happiness, which he certainly could not if he knew the truth."

Next day it was just the same—Mr. Ardrossan could not drive the thought of her out of his mind. Three days afterwards he went to Mulberry Street, Bethnal Green. Amongst other people there he saw Mary Gardiner. Olive's poor mother had died, when, if she had lived but a few months longer, it would have been such a joy to her child—this woman, whose life appeared to be of no value to herself or any one, was living still, and likely to live for six months. Struggling with this thought he left her room, and as he emerged from the dark staircase to the light of day outside he saw Miss Keithley and her aunt, Mrs. Ullathorne (of Bethnal Green), coming up the street.

It was no new thing for Mr. Ardrossan to meet Mrs. Ullathorne when going his rounds in his district. She was constantly to be seen in every corner of her husband's parish; and Mr. Ardrossan would have gone home with a sense of loss and strangeness if he had not somewhere encountered the good lady, with her well-worn black bonnet and gray waterproof, and her umbrella, which she carried for some mysterious reason, in spite of her own assertion that she had "nothing on that could spoil." Such as she was she always looked at home in these sordid, smoke-grimed streets; but pretty Miss Keithley, in her fresh print dress and white straw bonnet trimmed with lace and cowslips, looked like an unexpected flash of light in them. Miss Keithley had a basket of roots in her hand, which she was taking to a bit of waste ground left by pulling down some shops and warehouses. Mr. Ardrossan had bought this, and, with some expense of ingenuity and labor, had turned it into a playground and garden for the children of the neighborhood; and now even poor Rose Keithley was trying to do something to make it prettier for them by planting a few flowers likely to be strong enough

to prosper in such an uncongenial atmosphere. He had had no faith in any flower being able to hold up its head here, and had therefore contented himself with giving a large order for hardy ferns and evergreens; but she, perhaps, felt that even if her flowers did die in a month or two they would die in a good cause, having, at any rate, given pleasure before their lives came to an end. He was pleased with her gracious thought. He looked earnestly in her face to see if he had been right in his conjecture as to what her conduct would be. Had she broken off her engagement with William Morrison? and if so, how was she bearing her separation from him? He was certain that she had done this—he could see proof of it in every line of her face. On the spur of the moment he devised a plan which seemed good in his eyes, and with equal promptitude he laid it before her.

“Miss Keithley, you paint,” said he. “I hope you won’t be offended if I ask you to take a commission from me—I know you paint landscapes. I want you to paint me twelve half-imperial-sized views of foreign towns. I have a very particular use for them for one of my undertakings, and I especially want them to be done by a lady.”

Miss Keithley looked very much confused and astonished, and stammered that she was completely unworthy to be intrusted with such a commission—she could not paint half well enough.

“Oh, yes, you can: you painted that very pretty drawing of St. Hilda’s, in the Ellesmere Gallery. I saw it there yesterday. I liked it so much that I bought it.”

A glow of pleasure overspread Rose Keithley’s wan face. Had life still something to offer her? If she could do work which was worth doing she could find happiness in that—it might not be the transcendent happiness she had hoped for when she found she was to have him she loved, always with her; but work has its joys, and she knew it.

“If I thought I could do them well enough,” said she, “there is nothing I should like so much. I have never been abroad, and the very idea of going is delightful. I’d give anything to go—anything. I have wished it for years.”

Mr. Ardrossan was delighted. "Then you will let me consider it arranged?" said he.

"But I can't go alone," said Miss Keithley. "At least, can I?" she added, for she was hardly in the habit of looking on herself as a young and good-looking woman who would excite attention or admiration.

"No, you must have a companion; but no doubt you have some friend who will be willing to go. I leave the choice of subjects to you; but, if I may make a suggestion, I should like the Italian towns."

Better and better! The dream of Rosamond Keithley's youth had been to earn enough money by her painting to enable her some day to travel and see Venice and Verona, and Rome and Naples—towns whose very names seem to make you richer whenever you hear them.

"I should like you to go as soon as you can—at once, if possible," said Mr. Ardrossan, who was sure that the sooner she went the better would be her chance of recovering her peace of mind.

"It is finding the companion which is so difficult," said she in a low voice to Mrs. Ullathorne. "I might, perhaps, persuade Aunt Amelia to go with me—the complete change would do her good, I am sure."

"Aunt Amelia" was the invalid aunt who had been with Miss Keithley at St. Hilda's. Mrs. Ullathorne made a gesture of horror as soon as she heard her name, and cried, "Oh, no; that's quite out of the question. You must not think of it for a moment. Mr. Ardrossan wants you to paint him some pictures, and to have some pleasure while you are doing them. If you took your Aunt Amelia with you you would have to spend all your time in waiting on her. Rose, I do wish you would sometimes think of what is good for yourself. You have friends who paint: choose one of them."

"We need not discuss this now," said Rosamond to Mr. Ardrossan. "I will do my best to go quickly."

Mr. Ardrossan had been watching the faces of both ladies while this journey was being discussed, and had seen a look in Mrs. Ullathorne's which plainly showed that she

looked on it as a joy of too ecstatic a nature ever to come within the reach of a poor, hard-worked city clergyman's wife, whose treadmill of duty claimed her forever. Mr. Ardrossan and Mrs. Ullathorne had worked together in these busy streets for nearly twenty years, and he knew her to be as good a creature as ever breathed, and one with whom Rosamond could be quite happy.

"Couldn't you spare time to go with Miss Keithley?" said he. "You would be doing me a great service if you could; so, if you say yes, you must allow me to be your banker. Don't say no. I can get a person whom I know to be trustworthy to take charge of such of your work as must be done while you are away, and I will undertake to persuade the dear old doctor to let you go."

Mrs. Ullathorne looked bewildered. A pleasure which had always seemed to be unattainable was suddenly placed within her grasp. "I should be only too happy; that is, if you think it could possibly be arranged," said she, sighing with suppressed delight.

"And people tell you not to set too high a value on riches!" thought Mr. Ardrossan. "What folly that is! Thank God for the wealth He has given me, and thank Him also for the opportunity of sharing it with others!"

All this time they were walking together to the playground, and talking as best they could. Sometimes their way led them through wide streets, full of warehouses, and their speech was often interrupted by a great sack of flour or barrel of oil coming swinging down from some window far above to the wagon which was to bear it away. The noise of these wagons as they rolled along, full or empty, was deafening—it was almost impossible to hear what was said; and in the back streets and alleys it was equally difficult to keep up a conversation, for there they were obliged to pick their way one by one through groups of women, who seemed to be standing about for no particular reason—bonnetless for the most part, and shrouded in well-worn Paisley shawls, which probably covered up innumerable shortcomings in dress. Little children were there too, looking pale and prematurely old. And no wonder, for

all that makes life bright and happy was denied them—the streets where they played were dirty thoroughfares, littered with straw and refuse of every kind, and the air was so full of smoke that it could be tasted. "Poor things," said Mr. Ardrossan to himself, "how little one can do for them! How little, indeed, for any one!" But even while this thought was passing through his mind he saw a look in Rosamond Keithley's eyes which showed that he had been able to do something for her. She had evidently begun to think that life had a future; and as for Mrs. Ullathorne she was positively almost skipping along the pavement.

The playground was occupied by groups of children, swinging and playing in any way they best fancied. "Some of them must have been swinging all night," said a bystander of Mrs. Ullathorne's acquaintance. "They were hard at it when I went to bed; and when I looked out at four this morning it was just the same."

Mr. Ardrossan glanced round in some discontent. The work of growth was not going on fast enough for him. He wished his trees to rise up in one night like the beanstalk of happy memory and shut out the smoky houses, so bedizenized with flaring advertisements. At present every commodity of commerce was pressed on the notice of those who enjoyed the garden. Every house which hemmed it in had its blue or red board with gigantic yellow letters. Here, too, you had the headquarters of the Army of Salvation, with its war-cry well printed and legible; and face to face with it, on the opposite side the inclosure, a theater, and a gin-palace; the latter painted emerald green and mauve in one part, dark red and yellow ocher in another; and the whole pointed up with crimson and blue.

"Oh, never mind a little bright color," exclaimed Mrs. Ullathorne, who saw what was disturbing him. "The children like it—I like it too; so would you if you lived here."

"Should I really?" cried he, with a look of such horror that she could not help laughing heartily.

"The ground is prettily laid out," said she, gazing with

great satisfaction on the hard asphalt paths and great heaps of bricks which were piled up in methodical-looking beds and waiting to be made into ferneries.

"I don't know, I am sure; the shrubs look well enough; but I want to see the ferns green and growing," said he.

Rosamond Keithley shared his desire; but she was doing something more to the point than that—she had taken a trowel out of her basket and was planting her flowers. Seeing her thus engaged, Mr. Ardrossan said to Mrs. Ullathorne, "I shall send Miss Keithley a check for half the price of these drawings to-night. Will you tell me if you think I shall be right in assuming that they will be the same price as that of the same size in the Ellesmere?"

"Quite right," cried Mrs. Ullathorne, who knew nothing whatever about it, but was sure that Mr. Ardrossan could never be wrong. "How kind you are to propose to do that!—you remember everything. Dear Mr. Ardrossan, this is such a lucky thought of yours!—so very lucky, for poor Rose is not at all happy just now. She wouldn't like me to tell you, perhaps—so don't say anything to show that I have done so—but she has broken off her engagement with Mr. Morrison. She says she does not love him enough to marry him; but I am sure—I don't know—I saw her crying after she had done it, and I always thought she was very fond of him—as fond as any one could be."

Mr. Ardrossan could not honestly show any surprise. "And what did Morrison say when she did it?" he asked.

"Oh, he behaved remarkably well—he did everything he could to persuade her to let the engagement go on. He couldn't have behaved better; but she still said she was firmly resolved to break off with him."

"Then I suppose that's how it ended—he was obliged to let her do as she wished?"

"Well, of course a man has not much alternative when a girl speaks so very decidedly; but he refuses to take her answer as final. He says he wishes her to think it over for six months, after which time he will come to her; and then, if she still declares that she does not love him enough to marry him, he will accept his dismissal, but not till then."

"In other words, he won't profit by his release until he is quite certain that she knows her own mind," thought Mr. Ardrossan. "I expected him to behave like a gentleman."

They now went and watched Rose Keithley planting her roots: evening primroses, wallflowers, snapdragons, pinks, campanulas, and sweet-williams. There was nothing very rare about the contents of her basket; but still in a month or two the playground would look all the brighter for what she was doing.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Phadrus. This is the tree.

Socrates. Yes, indeed, and a fair and shady resting-place, full of summer sounds and scents.—PLATO: *Phadrus*.

I lay me-on the grass: yet to my will,
Albeit all is fair, there lacketh something still.

CHATTERTON.

"And so we awoke, and we rose in the dark,
And got, with our bags and our brushes, to work,"

SAID Morrison to himself as, about five months after the date of the last chapter, he thrust his neck into the yoke of a big sketching-bag, caught up a sketching-folio, and prepared to leave a very comfortable hotel in Dieppe, where he had been staying the last six weeks, for his morning's work. He must have been in tolerable spirits, or this adaptation of Blake's "Chimney Sweeper" would not have presented itself so readily to his mind; but in point of fact he was not getting up in the dark at all. That was a fiction indulged in for poetical purposes. In reality it was just half past seven, and a beautiful September morning; and besides that he was not going out one bit earlier than a host of other people, especially some young ladies who were at the very same time making their way down to the beach to bathe, with stout towels on their arms. As Morrison was leaving the hotel two of them had come into the garden which surrounded it, and were standing

under the bedroom windows of a certain "Janie," as he gathered from their discourse, and trying to persuade her to go and bathe with them. "Janie" appeared to hesitate—she was sure it would be cold, she said. Morrison thought she only wanted pressing; but the two outside were not disposed to take much trouble about her. "We can't wait," said one. "I do wish you would come; but if you won't—you won't." On this, of course, "Janie" shook her head with vigorous decision—persuasion would have softened her. The bathers turned to go. "Oh, by the by," cried one, "have you seen the 'Times,' Janie?"

"No. Is there anything nice in it?"

"Nothing very particular—only I was right about Mr. Ardrossan—I was sure I was at the time. He has married that girl he was always going about with in Rome. I told you he would. I wish I had had a good big bet on it, though."

Mr. Ardrossan married! Morrison turned back and ran into the hotel again, to have a look at the "Times" and see the name of the lady, and there he read:—

"At the British Embassy, Rome, John Ardrossan, Esq., of 83 Grosvenor Place, London, and Glen Duich, Rosshire, N.B., to Rosamond, only daughter of the late Walter Keithley, of Gower Street, London."

Then he was free to love Olive! He had been faithful to Rosamond Keithley. He had given her six months in which to make up her mind whether she could be happy with him or no, and until he got her answer he had thought it right to avoid Olive. Now an answer had come which was sufficient. Miss Keithley had said at the time that her decision was final, and had declined this offer of more time for thought; but as he had made it he considered himself bound, and bound, too, if at the end of the period she should come and say, "I can never love any one as I love you." Now he was free! Now he would go to Olive! For this day, however, he was loyally true to his drawing—it wanted more time, and should have the whole day; but he painted with a happy hope in his mind—there was just a chance that she might listen now.

Two days afterwards Mrs. Brooke was sitting with her two pretty young daughters, when Mr. Morrison was announced. He looked round the room for Olive; but no Olive was there; and when he asked where she was Mrs. Brooke said, "She has been in Cornwall, with us and her Aunt Alice, and now she has gone down to Yorkshire, with her other aunt, Miss Lettice Brooke. Oh, by the by, Mr. Morrison, you know Austerfield—that's where she has gone."

"When did she go?" he asked.

"Only this morning. If you had come yesterday you would have seen her. Now I don't know when you will have a chance of doing that, for she won't be back here for ever so long."

Morrison smiled. There were other places in the world in which he might see Olive besides Mrs. Brooke's drawing-room. He could not help thinking that, though a novelist and given to making plots herself, his dear friend was not quick at seeing plots which arranged themselves. This thought made him put a question. He had already been surprised to find her sitting reading to her daughters instead of writing as usual; so he asked if she had given up writing.

"Oh, no," was her reply; "I have not given it up, I hope—the doctor will not let me do that—but still I don't see how I am ever to go back to it. I find such dozens of things to do; in fact, I am rapidly becoming so firmly woven into the web of family life that I sometimes think I shall never be able to break loose from it again."

Morrison stayed some time, and while he was thus talking and thinking of her, Olive was on her way to Austerfield. At last she had got permission to go there. As soon as she found herself in Yorkshire she was full of eager interest and began to persecute Miss Lettice with questions.

"And you have the very same chintz!" she cried when she went into her bedroom, for there were the paroquets as bright and busy as ever. "It is the same; and my bed in London has had ever so many sets of new curtains.

And, oh! how delightful! the books are still there!" She looked out of the window—there was the garden brilliant with autumn flowers. She went to the looking-glass, almost expecting to see her own childish face reflected in it; but when she announced her intention of having a run round the garden she was told that dinner was ready; and when dinner was over it was dark.

Next day she resolved to make her rounds in the order which she had observed as a child. First came the garden. It was lovely; and so was the orchard, too, with hoary old fruit-trees covered with large rosy-cheeked apples; but she could find no dark or dangerous places, nor yet any which seemed as if they could ever have been lawfully regarded as such. She opened the wicket-gate which led from the garden to the churchyard. She went to the old stone coffin in which she and Willie had sat so often; then she walked round and looked at the tombstones. She found those of her grandfather and grandmother, and then that which bore the names of Willie's poor grandmother, his butcher-uncle, and some unknown cousins. Another tombstone, with an enormous lily carved on it, marked the grave of the only person in the village of whom Olive had a disagreeable recollection—a certain ill-tempered farmer, from whose tongue appallingly bad words were never absent. It was odd to put a lily on his tomb. Next she visited the village. It was a mere collection of dull cottages. She went to the humble home where Willie's young years had been spent. She had always recalled it as a nice little stone house, standing in its own garden. It was a four-roomed cottage, with a water-butt almost as big as itself standing by the door; a sanded doorstep and passage, and a strip of cabbage-garden at the side, with an ill-kept hedge, almost smothered with weeds. "It is terribly depressing to see these places," thought she. "And yet how angry I was with poor Willie for saying that Austerfield was a commonplace village!" Then she went to the field where Willie had hidden himself behind the corn-sheaves, and after that she walked to the Ayton Bank farm. What a long, long walk it had seemed then,

and how quickly she got there now! and besides that it was as unromantic and unpicturesque a walk as could have been found anywhere. She could have sat down and wept, her disappointment was so bitterly keen.

But she had kept the dearest spot of all till the last. At six o'clock in the evening she had always met Willie at a certain lime-tree in the prettiest field far or near, and there most of their time had been spent. That she knew was beautiful, and could not disappoint her. When the hour came she went. The field was very pretty and irregular, and through the midst of it came the rapid little stream she remembered so well. There was a time when not a corner of that field was unconnected with some delight. She walked through it now. She entered the little wood—the wood with dangerous places, and long leaps which might be successful and land you on the opposite bank, or might but deposit you in water too deep for safety, for here the channel of the stream was narrow. There seemed to be no place now where she could not step over with ease. It was pretty, it was nice, but it did not stir her heart, except so far as it was associated with Willie.

She returned to the lime-tree and seated herself on the great bare root on which she and Willie had always sat. She had wished to revisit these places for years, and had hoped to be so happy when she did so, and this joy also had proved a mere mockery, as every other joy to which she had ever looked forward had done. She covered her face with her hands and wept when she thought what an unhappy girl she was. She did not believe that there was another girl in England so unhappy as she. And she was not miserable without a cause. Her troubles were substantial, hard to bear at the time, and such as would leave their mark for life—there were so many things to make her hide her head in shame! And Willie! There was another deep disappointment. She had longed for years to be reunited to him; and when she did see him again how had he treated her? She was not thinking of his behavior in the train—that she had forgiven long ago—his heroic conduct afterwards had quite thrown into the shade anything

he had done to offend her; nay, more, had won her admiration for life. Besides, her own conscience told her that all he then said was true, and that her mode of life at that time was not such as a man of his stamp could care for. It was afterwards that he had treated her so ill. He had seemed to love her—had asked her to marry him, and then in an incredibly short space of time had engaged himself to another woman! How could he do so? How could any man be so fickle? With feminine perversity, in which she was by no means deficient, she did not take her refusal of him into account at all. "He might," thought she, "have seen that my head was quite full of something else—of something very important, which was making me far too unhappy to be able to think of love or of him—he might have waited till that was over. Besides, if he cared for me at all, how could he change so quickly? I turned to him directly my mind was my own again, and I was able to think of him and knew he loved me. I believe I have loved him all my life—not, perhaps, as an existing person, but as one of whom I dreamed; and when his flowers came I loved him just as much as ever, for I knew he was as nice as he used to be, or he would not have thought of sending them to me. But to go and get engaged so quickly!"

A slight sound startled her. She turned, and Morrison stood behind her. His train had brought him to Austerfield just in time to go to the old trysting-place at the old time. She rose to her feet, but was too much startled to speak. He too was scarcely able to speak, for he had said to himself all the way as he came, "If she cares for me at all I think some feeling will make her, on this first night at Austerfield, visit our old place of meeting at the same hour that we used to go." He had said this, and she was there; and when he saw her his face grew radiant with happiness and his eyes bright with hope.

"How do you do, Mr. Morrison?" said Olive rather stiffly. "I did not expect to see you here." She was terribly mortified that he should have found her where she was.

"No, of course you did not," said he; "but I had just a very faint hope that I might find you."

"There are not many walks in Austerfield," said she; "one has to go to such as there are."

"I wanted," he said, "to think that you came here, as I myself should always come, for the sake of former times—with some wish to see a place where I had spent so many hours—so many happy hours."

"Of course I did," replied Olive. "I have been to all the places where I used to play when I was a child, so, naturally, I came to this as well as the others."

"I saw Mrs. Brooke yesterday," said he; "she told me that you had left London for Yorkshire that very day."

"You were in London yesterday? Then did you come here to-day?" asked Olive, much surprised, and not at all pleased.

"Yes, I came to-day, because I wanted to see you."

"To see me?" she said coldly; for, under the circumstances, engaged as he was to another woman, she did not approve of his wishing so much to see her.

"Yes, to see you—the one person whom of all others I shall always most wish to see, Miss Brooke," he said hastily.

"Sit down again one minute—you were sitting when I came. Sit down and listen to something which I must say to you."

"Oh, no, it is late. I must go home," said Olive confusedly. "What have you to say to me, Mr. Morrison?"

"Much—everything—you must listen."

"Oh, by the by," said Olive, "I am quite forgetting to ask how Miss Keithley is—do tell me."

"Miss Keithley has married Mr. Ardrossan. He has got as noble a woman as ever lived. That's why I am here. I should not have been speaking to you now had it not been for this marriage; but, whether I came or stayed away, I should always have set you far above her and all other women."

"What! when you were engaged to her?" cried Olive.

"Yes, even when I was engaged to her. Miss Brooke, be generous—I will explain everything to you hereafter—

but trust me when I say I have not behaved ill about her. I thought it right to ask her to marry me. If you had not been in the world I have no doubt I should have loved her much more than I did. I did feel a very strong affection for her, though it was not real love. It was a mistake to offer to her; but she was the one to discover that, not I. She said she found she could never be happy with me. I was afraid that she had divined that you were the one whom I always had loved, and always would love; but it seems I was wrong, however. She has married Mr. Ardrossan. I am free. I seek you again—I shall never love any woman but you. You may think me foolish, or what you will, but I believe I have loved you ever since the day we first met. I only know that ever since that time I have never done anything without some secret reference to you. Every picture has been painted with the thought that your dear eyes might see it; and every time one was praised I thought, 'She may see that it is well-spoken of. She may, perhaps, understand how I am trying my hardest to bring myself one step nearer to her.' I know I am presumptuous; I know how much more so I must seem here, where there is everything to remind you what a poor little village boy I was when you first knew me; but still, if you could but love me, I do not think you are one who would care what my relations were. Olive, do love me—I can't live without you—I have loved you all my life."

During this long speech Olive had sat quietly. Now she did not look up, but said very gently, "Won't you sit down beside me—here, in your old place?" And she moved a little farther along the rugged old gnarled root. Morrison's head swam with the joy of a hope to which he dared not allow himself to trust. He sat down by her side. He looked at her. Her head was bent down, her hands were lying on her lap. He said, in a voice full of suppressed emotion, "When we sat here together we always sat hand-in-hand."

Her head sank lower and lower. She did not seem angry with him, but she did not speak.

"Do speak to me," cried he. "Tell me if I may dare

to hope. You do not check me, but you give me no hope."

She was still silent. She was wondering to herself how it was that now, when she so much wanted to speak to him, she could not force her lips to utter one single sound. She tried repeatedly, but still could not.

"I am distressing you," said he, "but I must. I have come all the way from France just to say this to you. It is no new thing on my part to feel thus—I said the same thing to you in the winter; I have wished to say it for years. Nothing but my own consciousness that I had no right to approach you with such a proposal has kept me away from you so long. I am still unworthy to offer myself to you, but I have more hope than I had of making a position for myself of which you won't be ashamed; and if you would but love me, dear Olive, I should work a thousand times better. You don't know how I would work." Having said this he looked in her face so earnestly that it seemed as if no feeling of her heart could be hidden from him. "Make some sign if you wish me to be silent on this subject forever," said he, pitying her; and then he watched her with a sickening dread lest the sign for which he had asked should not be given to him. She made no sign. She even attempted to raise her shy eyes to his and let him see that there was a gleam of love and trust in them, but they fell under his gaze almost before they met it. "Oh, Olive," cried he, "have mercy. You do not drive me away, but do not bless me by halves. 'Oh, love me in all, or love me not at all.' Now that a glimpse of hope seems to be vouchsafed me I feel as if I must have all or nothing. Can you love me, Olive?" And as he spoke he held out his hand. She slowly laid hers in it. There was a moment's silence, and then she spoke, and her words came swiftly and apparently without an effort. "Can I love you? you ask. I believe I have loved you all the time. I am quite sure I have never loved any one else. It seems to me that you are the only one who can make my life perfect."

Morrison's heart leaped for joy. Not only had she ac-

cepted him, but she was expressing the very thought which made one of the chief delights of his love for her. She alone could make his life a perfect whole. His love for her ran back as far as memory could reach. It had gladdened his boyhood, elevated his youth, and, please God, should elevate and sustain him as long as life lasted. "My darling Olive!" he cried, tightly clasping the hand, which now as of old lay so contentedly in his. "We always have loved each other, and we always will. Now we will be so happy. You did not look happy when I came to you."

"I was miserable—very miserable. I was counting up my losses, and I seemed to have lost everything. I felt quite alone in the world." A pressure of the hand told her that that grief was hers no longer. "And I was vexed to find Austerfield so ugly."

"It is not ugly," he cried, in his turn indignant. "It may not be what is called beautiful scenery, but it is just as beautiful as we were fitted for. To us the world was summed up in this one field. It held all that we were capable of admiring. It contained a specimen in miniature of every kind of beauty in nature. No, it's not ugly, but small. But, Olive, what made you not care for it just now, and what made me not care for it when I was here before, was that we were alone. We were never alone when we were here before. How happy we were together! We must never part more."

"You are right," said Olive. "It was because I was alone. Once when I was a child, I was just as miserable, and saw no beauty or pleasure in anything. It was that day when I thought you had left me to go to see some wild beasts; but, after all, you had stayed at home for my sake. It was the last day we were together do you remember?"

"Do I remember? I remember everything—every single thing that happened that day."

Olive blushed, for she too remembered that day, and how she had flung her arms round his neck and kissed him, and told him she should love him for ever and ever.

"Don't mind my remembering everything so well. My recollections are very delightful."

"We were happy children," said Olive. "The only sorrow we ever had was that our flowers would fade. We decorated a bower with garlands, and cried because they withered in a day. Oh, look at the sun! How beautiful it makes everything. It is like magic!"

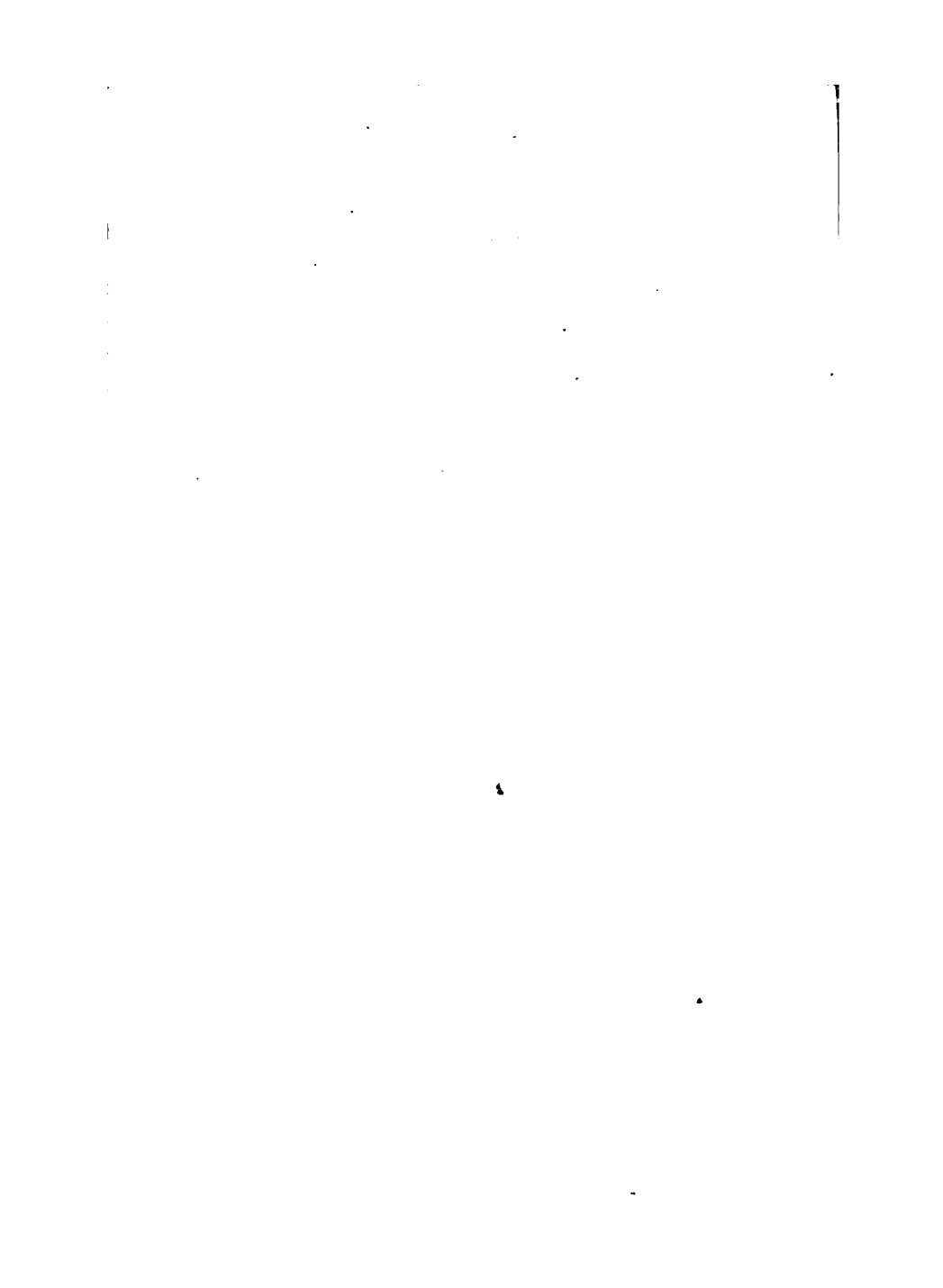
Long rays of crimson were streaming across the field and glorifying all that they touched. She watched it with admiring eyes, but truthfulness compelled her to add, "I dare say I should have thought that ugly too, if you had not come."

They watched the sun till it sank below the horizon; then Olive said, "I must go home. Aunt Lettice will be anxious if I don't. You will come with me, won't you? Oh, Willie, I am so happy!" She was still happier when she entered the house, for Miss Lettice came to meet her with a letter in her hand—a letter with an Indian stamp. It was from her father:—

MY CHILD (said Sir Chesterfield), I have heard everything. You and your dear mother thought it kinder to keep the painful knowledge from me, but you were wrong. The fear that she had possibly been treated with injustice and cruelty has tormented me for years. That dread would never have left me, howsoever well you kept the secret. Now that my most painful fears are confirmed, and, besides that, I find that my dear wife is lost to me forever, one thing only remains for me to do—to come home, and so long as life is left to me try to be a good father to you. God bless you, my own dear ill-used child. You will see me soon after you receive this. Try to forgive me and love me as your father. Full justice shall be done your dear mother's memory. I feel heart-broken when I think of all that she must have suffered. My darling, if you can forgive me for having treated you with such neglect, the remaining years of my life shall be spent in trying to make yours more happy. I long to be with you, for your mother's sake and for your own.

CHESTERFIELD BROOKE.

THE END.



**THE YOUNG FOLKS' CYCLOPÆDIA OF PERSONS
AND PLACES.** By JOHN D. CHAMPLIN, JR. 8vo.
Illustrated. \$3.50.

"A companion volume to his 'Young Folks' Cyclopædia of Common Things.' The two together form a miniature library of useful information, biography, travel, and story. The matter under most of the heads is necessarily brief, but it is presented in simple language, and all but the most essential facts are sacrificed to what may be romantic in the lives of persons, or picturesque about places. It admirably fills the place of a classical dictionary for young people, and such illustrations as the frontispiece showing the sight of the Olympic games with the buildings restored, are well chosen. Another picture makes a never-to-be-forgotten impression of the comparative heights of famous buildings, the great pyramid serving for a background, and only acknowledging one work of man of greater altitude—the Cologne Cathedral. The Sphinx marks the other extreme. The illustrations add greatly to the value of the work, and as a rule are well done. In the main, they (the portraits) answer every requirement, and some of them, like those of Nordenskiöld and Jules Verne, are spirited. This is a book that has novelty and wear in it."—*N. Y. Tribune*.

"The work is intended particularly for young readers, as its title indicates, but its capacity for usefulness is by no means restricted to them. With its companion, it forms a cyclopædia in two volumes, which in a very well make good the want of larger works of the kind in families where larger works are not present."—*N. Y. Evening Post*.

**THE YOUNG FOLKS' CYCLOPÆDIA OF COMMON
THINGS.** By John D. Champlin, Jr., late Associate Editor
of the American Cyclopædia. Copiously Illustrated. Large
12mo, \$3.00; Sheep, \$4.00; Half Morocco, \$5.25.

"It is a thoroughly excellent thing, thoroughly well done, and there can be no doubt whatever that in every household into which it shall come the book will go far to educate children in that skilful and profitable use of books which distinguishes scholarly book-owners from those who are not scholars. . . . A cyclopædia expressly for the use of children, restricting its titles to things about which children are likely to be curious, and presenting the information desired in as clear, simple and plain a manner as possible, aiding the child's comprehension with illustrations."—*N. Y. Evening Post*.

"The practice of consulting a work of this kind would greatly tend to quicken the power of attention, to stimulate juvenile curiosity, and to strengthen the habit of careful and accurate reading, as well as to enrich the memory with a store of instructive and valuable facts. The present volume is a model of construction and arrangement. It has been prepared by an experienced and intelligent scholar, uncommonly well versed in the different branches of learning, and trained by large practice in the difficult art of lucid, exact, and comprehensive statement."—*N. Y. Tribune*.

HILLEBRAND'S GERMAN THOUGHT. From the Seven
Years' War to Goethe's Death. 12mo. \$1.75.

HISTORY OF AMERICAN POLITICS. By ALEXANDER
JOHNSTON, A.M. 16mo. 75 cts.

"In reality, the history of American political parties from the foundation of the government down to the accession of Mr. Hayes. . . . It would not be possible to get at the facts which are here accumulated, arranged in the most orderly manner, in a very clear and absolutely colorless narrative in a small duodecimo, without turning over at least a dozen larger works. . . . We cannot commend Mr. Johnston's little book too highly."—*Nation*.

**CORY'S (WILLIAM) GUIDE TO MODERN ENGLISH
HISTORY.** Part I., 1815-1830. 8vo. \$2.00.

**ESCOTT'S ENGLAND: HER PEOPLE, POLITY AND
PURSUITS.** By T. H. S. Escott. 8vo. (Uniform with
Wallace's "Russia.") \$4.00.

W.B. CLARKE & CARRUTH
Booksellers.
BOSTON, MASS.

HENRY HOLT & CO., Publishers, 12 East 23

OLD PARIS:
By CATHERINE

"Resembles in so easy, sprightly, now
—*Athenaeum, London*

"One of the most picture of the time, what it was. The necessity, if we may so say. . . Of rarely

DOBSON'S
an Introduction

"If there is any well turned expression
Minister Review.

PRACTICAL
JANVIER.

"Conceived in a seeks to give expression as will enable them to wares readily and a nomenclature of the of the manufacture

BERLIOZ' (I
TERS, and
lated by W

RYDBERG'S
Translated

POPULAR I
SIR George
MYTHOLOG
from the se

SYMMONDS
ARTS.

JOHNSON'S
those of M
GRAY, A
Preface by
and Carly
12mo. \$2

BOSWELL'S
TO THE H
of obsolete

KEMBLE'S

Large 12mo, with Portrait. \$2.50.

MRS. BRASSEY'S SUNSHINE AND STORM IN THE EAST. With 114 Illustrations and two maps (Author's Edition). 8vo, \$3.50.

"At least as diverting as her earlier voyages, if not even more so. . . The most lively and entertaining book we have read for many months."—*London Saturday Review*.

MRS. BRASSEY'S AROUND THE WORLD IN THE YACHT With Chart and eight new full

HENRY HO

ast 23d Street, N. Y.

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

JAN 26 1911

DUE OCT '64 H

227 461

WIDENER

CANCELLED

NOV 10 1988

28103571

21488.27.5

The leaden casket,

Widener Library

003332673



3 2044 086 829 017